















GERALDINE

*A SOUVENIR OF THE ST. LAWRENCE*





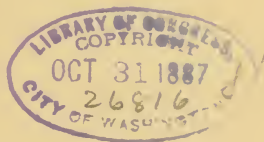




# GERALDINE

A SOUVENIR OF THE ST. LAWRENCE

Illustrated



BOSTON  
TICKNOR AND COMPANY

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1888

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1888

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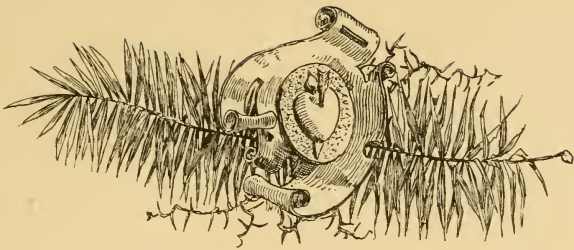
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University Press :  
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

To One  
Who shall here be Nameless.





## PREFACE TO THE ILLUSTRATED EDITION.

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As they are about sending to press this illustrated edition of "Geraldine," its publishers forward to me a proof of the original Preface, and kindly ask, "Have you anything new, or different, or additional, that you would like to say?" At once I recall certain critiques of the book which have appeared, and wonder if any word from its unknown author will serve convincing purpose; for the critiques mentioned did not hesitate to discredit a simple statement which that original Preface made, and to affirm, despite of it, that "Geraldine" was written in imitation of "Lucile." Will they now accept a reiteration of the fact that this effort was determined upon before the publication of "Lucile," and was put into complete form before the writer had read, or heard read, or otherwise learned the character of that rhythmic romance? I fear not. Yet the fact stands; and I prefer leaving it thus on simple record, unsupported by personality or argument,—for the many to acknowledge, as they have done heretofore; for the few to doubt, if they choose.

“Geraldine” has won friends. The inquiries, comments, commendations, criticisms, confessions, and correspondence which it has called out would form a large and rather interesting volume. Were they now at hand I might be tempted to fill several pages with extracts curious. I remember well one letter, from a gentleman of some literary repute in a Southern State, which, among other things, frankly said: “How you learned certain facts in my own experience that I supposed hidden from all the world, it puzzles me to tell.” Of course I did not know them, any more than he knew the unknown author whom he addressed. But scores of testimonies have come to me, showing in like manner how closely parallel these my pages run to the deep lines of many a human life.

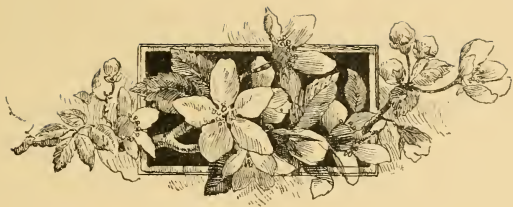
I feel warmly grateful to Messrs. Ticknor & Co. for thus adding to the feeble gifts of my pen the lavish graces of their book-making art. They have succeeded, far beyond all possibilities of mine alone, in producing a souvenir of the St. Lawrence, and a remembrance of the mountains, which those who best love American scenery will appreciate most.

THE AUTHOR OF “GERALDINE.”

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS,

July 27, 1887.



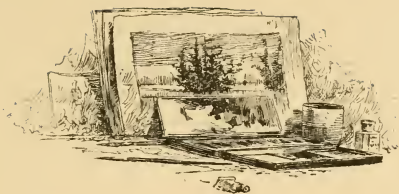


## P R E F A C E.

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YEARS ago I resolved to write a romance in the style of verse which follows. I chose this style as specially well adapted to a wide variety of expression, and because at that time, so far as I knew, no author had employed it at such length and for such purpose. When it was similarly made use of by an English poet, at a date much more recent than my resolve, his poem's popularity confirmed my choice as wise; but I have refrained persistently from reading that poem, or hearing it read, or in any way learning of its character, spirit, and scope, lest unconsciously I might borrow of its style or thought. Having now taken leave, as far as probably I ever can, of my own "Geraldine," I shall devote the earliest leisure accorded me to becoming acquainted with Owen Meredith's "Lucile."





## List of Illustrations.

[Drawn, engraved, and printed under the supervision of A. V. S. ANTHONY.]

GERALDINE . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
HEADPIECE TO FIRST PREFACE . . . . .	5
HEADPIECE TO SECOND PREFACE . . . . .	7
HEADPIECE TO ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .	9
TAILPIECE TO ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .	15
“It is true that he took to occasional rhymes With an art that was rather instinctive at times” . . . . .	21
TAILPIECE . . . . .	24
“She looked up at him then With a smile that he read as a sort of amen” . . . . .	27
“A man Standing there by the sea where the sand-reaches ran” . . . . .	31
TAILPIECE . . . . .	34
ON THE EDGE OF THE TOWN . . . . .	35

“A right merry season we had at the table: I know ’t would amuse you in turn, were I able To write out the many bright things that were said” . . . . .	39
TAILPIECE . . . . .	40
THE APPROACH TO THE TOWN . . . . .	42
THE GOD OF LOVE . . . . .	51
“Where the roses are blowing” . . . . .	53
TAILPIECE . . . . .	54
“You forget That last evening we waited to see the sun set On the top of Mount Vision” . . . . .	58
“Or is still As the spring that begets yonder musical rill In its home in the wild” . . . . .	60
“Her throbbing Heart weary and tempted, and sore with its sobbing” . . . . .	65
TAILPIECE . . . . .	66
“She smiled At his liberal purpose. She seemed like a child In her simple acceptance of pleasures to be” . . . . .	69
“Over meadows of green with their velvety sod, To the steeps, that are harder to climb” . . . . .	71
CALUMET, ST. LAWRENCE RIVER . . . . .	72
TWIN ISLAND, ST. LAWRENCE RIVER . . . . .	74
“He went out, and strolled down to the wharf, where the boats Lay awaiting the morrow” . . . . .	76
“The vessel’s light bow, Deftly cutting the deep, slid along on the prow Of his boat, and upset it” . . . . .	77
“And he took The white hand that she offered him warmly” . . . . .	79

LIGHTHOUSE, ALEXANDRIA BAY . . . . .	80
THE CANADIAN CHANNEL . . . . .	81
ENTRANCE TO LAKE OF THE ISLES . . . . .	84

“A cool, grassy point that projected From one of the islands was wisely selected, In sight of the Lake of the Isles” . . . . .	87
--	----

“All at once went aboard, and prepared to depart” . . . . .	91
---	----

“By and by they swung round, and across the broad sweep Of the river below, as along the soft steep Of the sky the late moon slowly climbed” . . . . .	94
--	----

TAILPIECE . . . . .	96
---------------------	----

“‘I suspect Mrs. Lee knew the arts Of a finished coquette, and made playthings of hearts, In some earlier time’” . . . . .	99
--	----

PIAZZA, CROSSMON'S HOTEL . . . . .	102
------------------------------------	-----

“A half shaded shore Gave them welcome; its turf, that was mossy and sweet, Running down to the water to welcome their feet” . . . . .	103
--	-----

“‘She was silent a little, and motionless sat, Looking into the depths of the shimmering deep” . . . . .	108
---	-----

“The storm was at hand; but the long Way was over at last, as he lifted the skiff Half its length on the sand, at the base of a cliff” . . . . .	114
--	-----

“‘You have seen the white calla Unfold all its treasure of purity’” . . . . .	116
--	-----

“He rose to his feet where he knelt, Put her tenderly from him, and strode to the door As if panting for air” . . . . .	118
---	-----

“‘With the aid Of a blanket or two, and a pillow, I think You could rest very well’” . . . . .	121
--	-----

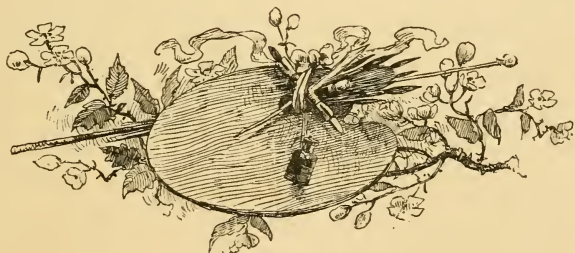
DEER ISLAND . . . . .	126
"Rising early, he took His way down to the wharf" . . . . .	129
POINT MARGUERITE, ALEXANDRIA BAY . . . . .	131
TAILPIECE . . . . .	132
"The short, slow, lazy strokes of their boatman were swift To their longing desire. 'T would have pleased them to drift" . .	141
"Yet restless and troubled did Trent linger there By the casement" . . . . .	143
BOAT WHARF, CROSSMON'S . . . . .	144
"To which message she speedily gave A complaining, pathetic response" . . . . .	148
"She pictured it well, And in spirit dramatic" . . . . .	150
"And he bowed, Self-possessed and amused, to the gathering crowd, And betook his way down to the river" . . . . .	153
BONNIE CASTLE, ALEXANDRIA BAY . . . . .	154
"The beauties benignant Amid which he rowed could not suddenly quiet The feverish pulse" . . . . .	156
"Where the silver St. Francis, asleep in the sun, Smiled them welcome unworded" . . . . .	161
TAILPIECE — MONTREAL ISLAND . . . . .	164
MONTREAL FROM THE ISLANDS . . . . .	165
"The next morning the height Of historic Cape Diamond first greeted his sight, And above the gray walls of the citadel hung The tricolor of Britain" . . . . .	169



“‘And yet, If I lounge on the Terrace when Fashion has set Its gay current’” . . . . .	175
WOLFE’S MONUMENT . . . . .	177
“Its rugged and angular steeps Sloping gently and soft to the river that sleeps At their base” . . . . .	179
TAILPIECE — FORGET-ME-NOTS . . . . .	182
“Yet her heart appeared swelling to burst, And her lips were as dry as if parching with thirst” . . . . .	187
TAILPIECE — THISTLES . . . . .	192
“The Bay of Sweet Laughter, that looks up to heaven Untroubled and glad, — sunny Ha-Ha” . . . . .	195
TAILPIECE . . . . .	200
“When Trent came at last, From her wearisome doubting and fearing she passed To a loving acceptance of good in to-day” . . . . .	204
TAILPIECE . . . . .	206
“Yet calmly, he spoke, — ‘I suspect that you read With a vision much deeper than mine’” . . . . .	211
“While he still on the reed of his purpose would lean, She made answer to answer of his” . . . . .	219
“‘Foolish tears! As they fall Down my face, I am glad that hereafter not all Of my bitterest weeping can rob it of sweetness’” . . . . .	221
TAILPIECE . . . . .	222
EARLY WINTER IN RIVERMET. . . . .	224
“‘I were less A weak woman, and more like a saint, could I hold To my faith without doubting forever’” . . . . .	227

TAILPIECE . . . . .	232
“ When to him, But a day or two later, this brief message came” . . . . .	235
“ She began her reply with the utterance strong Of a passionate nature unmastered” . . . . .	239
TAILPIECE . . . . .	242
“ The roll and the sweep of their reaches are grand As the ocean unbounded” . . . . .	245
TAILPIECE . . . . .	248
“ From his wild mountaineering alone Trent returned To a town of the mines, for some letters expected” . . . . .	250
“ “ You are near The next world, my poor fellow,’ said Trent. ‘ Do you fear To go out of this into the other?’ ” . . . . .	257
“ “ It is noon; but the end Of your life may appear like the close of a day. It is twilight for you’ ” . . . . .	261
TAILPIECE . . . . .	262
“ “ Believing you’d learn In my arms to grow happy and strong, and return All I give you’ ” . . . . .	265
TAILPIECE . . . . .	270
“ Through the white atmosphere He could see other peaks lifted far to the blue Of the sky; while the distance took boundaries new As he slowly ascended” . . . . .	276
“ There were tears On his face. He fell prostrate, and swift the fleet years Passed before him as thus he lay prone” . . . . .	279
“ He awoke As the storm gathered might, and a thunder-gun spoke Just above him with utterance awful. He sprung To his feet” . . . . .	281

TAILPIECE . . . . .	282
TAILPIECE . . . . .	288
“He gave her a picture,—as clear A reflection of her as she ever had faced At the mirror” . . . . .	292
“A flame Of indignant denial burned over her cheeks” . . . . .	295
TAILPIECE . . . . .	300
TAILPIECE . . . . .	308
“As he turned At her sudden appeal, close in rear of him burned The hot breath of the blaze. He sprang down to the floor, And as quickly flew to her” . . . . .	314
TAILPIECE . . . . .	316



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GERALDINE





# GERALDINE.

---

## I.



HERE is something of poetry born in us  
each,

Though in many, perhaps, it is born  
without speech,—

An existence but dumb and uncertain,  
that strives

For expression in vain through the whole of their lives;  
That is glad when the spring wears its beautiful smile,  
And is sad when all nature to tears would beguile;  
That can feel in the summer a glory divine  
Thrilling on through the days in their silvery shine;  
That can drink in delight in its radiance rare  
When the mellow-hued autumn breathes peace like a prayer;  
That can weep with the world in its woe of to-day,  
And to-morrow take part in its merriest play;  
That can stand on the mountain-tops often, and see  
Where the far-away gardens of paradise be;  
That can sound with its plummet of feeling the deeps  
Where despair in the darkness of destiny sleeps;  
That can feel, and can be, yet can never express  
All the feeling and being its life may possess,  
But that yearns with a yearning no poet e'er knew  
In its silence of years for the speech of the few.

He was barely a poet, this friend of my verse,  
Though the singers not seldom at measure are worse,  
And at rhyme; for his ear was so delicate strung  
That it caught the clear music, whatever was sung,  
And was deaf to all discord, or listened as one  
For whom time of tormenting had early begun:  
He was less than a poet, if poetry means  
To bewilder the senses with fanciful scenes;  
To envelop each thought with such mystery round  
As to leave it a marvel of meaning profound;  
To make semblance of passion, and tragedy act  
As if love were a lie, and all fiction were fact;  
To be chiefly unreal, yet ever to seem  
As if always the real came dressed in a dream.  
Yet men spoke of his poems with praise, though they said,  
"He is playing at verse," as delighted they read:  
"He was meant for a poet in earnest, but waits  
For a storm-flood of feeling to open the gates  
Of his soul, till the song that is hidden shall rise  
Over hearts that are hushed with a sudden surprise."

It is true that he took to occasional rhymes  
With an art that was rather instinctive at times:  
You might call it a genius; but what, in the test,  
Is a genius for doing, but doing it best?  
And although at poetic expression he caught  
Half the grace of a poet, and added the thought  
And the sentiment often, and many could praise  
With a flattery honest his lyrics and lays,  
He was not at his best in this work of his pen:  
For his speech was a power to move upon men:  
And he held that the work of his life was to speak  
As he might for the right, be it humble and weak:  
And his words were unfaltering, fearless, and strong

In the ears of the world in complaint of the wrong.  
He was better at prose than at verse; for he made  
Every sentence to cut like the stroke of a blade  
Never dull: he was quick to discover the sense  
Of all sophistries subtle; and every pretence  
He would riddle and scathe with an irony born  
Of his genuine honor, his marvellous scorn.



They had faith in his future, who frequently heard  
His defence of the true ringing out till it stirred  
Every heart to keen sympathy. But, as for him,  
It was little he thought of the years that were dim  
In the distance ahead. He was living to-day  
With its needs and its gifts; and no cynic could say  
He was laggard of life. Full abreast of the hour  
Did he keep, never sparing of work or of power.

He was spendthrift of being, without any heed  
For the want of the morrow, its duty or need,  
"Let the future take care of itself," was his thought :  
"If I care for the present, as every man ought,  
Do the work of a man with the will of a man,  
'Tis enough."

So he made neither purpose nor plan  
For the future : he held no ambitious desire  
To mount up on his deed to a deed that was higher.  
No ideal he worshipped, of work or reward.  
As if he were a servant, and labor his lord,  
He would do every task that before him was set  
With his might, and the wages of work would forget  
In the pleasure of work, never counting it vain  
That he wearied his body, and wasted his brain,  
Without recompense fit ; since instinctive he knew  
That the best compensation for service most true  
Is but had in the serving ; that wages are small,  
Be they measureless even, if wages are all.

Yet he wondered sometimes, in a curious way,  
How to-morrow would differ in work from to-day ;  
What its spirit would be ; what its impulse and scope :  
What its faith and its feeling, its heart and its hope :  
And so wondering often, he stood, as it seemed,  
At the door of a duty of which he had dreamed  
In some dream of great doing,—a something so broad  
That it reached from his hand to the hand of his God,  
Taking in by its infinite measure and span  
The upholding of truth, the uplifting of man,  
In especial degree ; but he shrank as with fear  
From the possible future, unsought and too near.  
He was conscious that on in the years he would find  
More of life than might add to the peace of his mind ;

Yet so vaguely he felt it, so faint did it seem,  
That he counted his consciousness only a dream,  
And gave heed to it rarely.

One evening he wrote  
In such mood to the friend of his heart,—just a note,  
When the veil of his vision half lifted to show  
A few glimpses beyond:—

“That you love me, I know;  
That I love you, my darling, you feel just as sure,  
And that both of our loves to the end will endure.  
But the end? I am here face to face with the dread  
That in pathways unlooked for my feet must be led;  
That your life and my own are to drift far apart  
As the true from the false. There’s a cry in my heart  
Of regret and dismay; for you measure the sum  
Of my wishes and wants, and your love has become  
The one thing of my craving,—none other so sweet  
And so strong and so helpful. None other could meet  
Just the need of my soul as you meet it. I feel  
That you feel this and know it; and I should conceal  
Such a fancy as here I have named, but that you  
Have a faith that is strong, and a heart that is true.  
And will say I am morbid, and need but your kiss  
To return me the hope and the cheer that I miss.

“I have told you before of the fancy I hold,  
That my work is to be by some duty controlled  
Which I may not discover till years have gone by;  
And perhaps through some wilds of experience I  
Must pass in to my clear field of labor. My way  
Has been sunny and bright all along till to-day;  
But I know, as I know that I live, that there are  
Heights and depths in my nature transcending by far  
All that yet I have measured. No gift is for nought,

Be it even to suffer; and sorrow unsought  
May bear fruit that is sweet from the bitterest seed.  
You will see where this logic must certainly lead:  
Any gift is for ultimate use. We may wait  
All unknowing, unheeding, capacity great  
To enjoy or to suffer; dead levels of life  
May reach onward before us; the wearying strife  
Of the days may go on without increase or rest;  
We may seem of but commonplace being possessed,  
With its commonplace ends to be met: but in time  
To some great height of gladness we sudden may climb,  
Or go down to some valley of grief, where the dark  
Never knows the sun's rising or song of a lark  
Singing straight into heaven, or amid all the din  
Of the every-day battle some peace may begin,  
Like the silence of God in its regal content,  
Till we learn what the lesson of yesterday meant.

“But forgive me, my darling, for hinting of tears  
In the possible future. What comes with the years  
We'll accept as we may, never dreaming of pain  
In the present; believing God's morrows are gain,  
Be they cloudy or bright, let them hold what they will.  
We are wedded to life, if for good or for ill,  
Or for better or worse; and its issues must be  
As is best and is wisest for you and for me,  
If to-day we are faithful and trustful and true.  
And so love me, my darling, as I must love you.”





## II.



HALL we go and hear Trent to-night, Bell,  
at the Hall?"

Major Mellen was making his afternoon  
call

On the witty and beautiful Isabel Lee,

Whom so often in leisure he dropped in to see.

They were cousins, by kin or by common consent:

If the former, 't was distant.

"You've heard about Trent?"

"He who wrote that sweet thing in the last magazine,  
Which you read me one night,—'In my Passion Serene'?"

"Yes, the same. We were friends, he and I, long ago,  
As I told you, I think. He's a man you should know,—  
Can talk poetry, prose, metaphysics, or sing  
His own songs to you even, with pathos to bring  
The quick tears to your cheek. He has sentiment strong,  
As you'll see by and by, when you weep at his song;  
But reform is his hobby: he'll go for the Right  
With a capital R, in his lecture to-night;  
And they say as a speaker his powers are rare—  
I've not heard him in years. But, good coz, have a care!  
He's engaged to a lovely brunette, with dark hair

And pink cheeks, like yourself: were her beauty but blonde,  
You might win him away with the contrast."

"Beyond

Any question he's safe, my dear major. The man  
Who can sing of a passion serene, as he can,  
Must have little of passion to stir. I'm afraid  
That your paragon would n't just suit me, — too staid  
And too deep. His philosophy matches not mine;  
For love is n't as water. You sip it like wine,  
And grow giddy and wild with the tasting. His words,  
As you read them, were sweet as the singing of birds;  
But I like not his faith." And her finely cut face  
Had a look that was puzzling. The very least trace  
Of surprise had the major's.

"You do not suppose,"

He remarked, "that the rhyme of a verse-maker shows  
His true feeling? You never would take him to task  
For philosophy, sentiment, worn as a mask  
To conceal what is under? A woman will veil  
What she feels in expression each lover must fail  
To unriddle; and poets are privileged, too,  
As to much that they say, if not all that they do.  
If a poet pretend to write out of his heart,  
It is mainly pretence; and the very best art  
That he has is in making men weep while he grieves  
Over fiction he never one moment believes,  
But they swallow as fact."

She looked up at him then  
With a smile that he read as a sort of amen.

"And so be it, what then?" he continued. "Why, this:  
All the woes of a poet are idle; his bliss  
Never blisters the paper he pours out his life on;  
His pen's not a patent, particular siphon



To run off the liquid of love, in his verse,  
 From his soul. If ecstatic, he's simply unreal:  
 His sonnets of love are to something ideal,  
 As the love that he sings."

"You are bitter, now, major;  
 Sarcastic and bitter and foolish. I'll wager  
 You once took to sonnets yourself, when more callow.  
 Don't let any talent you've buried lie fallow;



Turn poet again, since the trick of deceit  
 You have learned (if the sum of all poetry sweet  
 Be pretence), which a poet must practise, and cover  
 Your faith and your feeling when you are a lover."

She laughed,—just a ripple of music from lips  
That too often put pearly white teeth in eclipse;  
And he echoed her mirth rather languidly.

“ Well,

It is certain I never plied you, Madame Bell,  
With my sonnets,” he parried; “ and no other glances  
Than yours could allure me to making advances  
Afoot or on Pegasus *then*. I’ll not say  
By the light of whose look and whose smile I might stray  
From my loyalty now. I confess I am grown  
Rather fickle to love and to truth, as is known  
To the most of my friends.”

And a smile half-sarcastic  
Ran over his features so mobile and plastic.

“ But this fellow Trent, he’s as true, on my soul,  
As the needle, much boasted, is true to the pole;  
Not but that a bright woman like you, cousin dear,  
With an iron heart in her, if coming too near,  
Might attract him and win him, and hold him a while;  
But he’d turn by and by from her lessening smile  
To his star in the north.”

“ To his passion serene,  
He would say, I suppose. That remains to be seen ” —

“ And be tested? Perhaps. You must hear him to-night,  
And then let me present him. His theme may be trite;  
But he’ll say what he says in so pleasing a diction,  
You’ll think to be fact, philosophical fiction  
The blankest,—at least for a little. No doubt,  
When the ring of his words into silence dies out,  
You will question your faith, and will count it absurd,  
And be freed from it quite. But the song of a bird  
You believe when you hear it (though haply it sing  
Of some hope whose fruition no morrow may bring)

For the music that's in it; and Trent has a voice  
That may even your sensitive hearing rejoice.  
You will go if I call for you early?"

"I'm free

To confess I would like this young poet to see,  
Since you paint him so warmly. Invite him to sup  
With us after the lecture. I'll brew him a cup  
Of sweet compliments, if he deserve it, and learn  
What he thirsts for the most from the world in return  
For his gifts to the world, — whether praises or pence;  
Whether garlands of roses, or blossoms of sense;  
Whether wooing or worship. Your geniuses crave  
Very much of their friends: you must serve them as slave,  
Or cajole them as equal, with flattery sweet  
To their taste; you must fawningly lie at their feet,  
Or devotedly feed them with bonbons. The more  
You bestow, will they ask. They're a terrible bore  
To your patience, and make a most liberal drain  
On your pity."

"Be merciful, Bell! It is plain  
That you're jealous of genius. Such comments as those  
I must flatly resent." And he, laughing, arose.  
"For we should not be blamed, who are pets of the stars  
And the heirs of the gods. Any failing that mars  
Our strict beauty of life is a fault half divine."  
And with playful assumption, and graceful incline  
Of the head in adieu, he departed.

Her look

Of amusement departed as well, and she took  
From the table a volume of verse that a friend  
For her reading had lately been thoughtful to send, —  
A collection of poems as varied in tone  
As in merit. But one of its pages alone,  
As she absently turned them, arrested her thought, —

A few stanzas of sentiment, common, but fraught  
With a passionate longing some time to be met  
In the hope of the poet. The name that was set  
At the end caught her eye ere attention she lent  
To the poem itself: it was *Percival Trent*;  
And the title prefixed to the verse chanced to be  
But suggestive of meaning. It ran:—

·BY THE SEA.

I stood one day beside the sounding sea,  
Amid a treeless waste of barren sand;  
The billowy breezes soft blew over me,  
And wooed me sweetly with their kisses bland.

A subtle something lingered in their breath,  
And charmed me long to glad forgetfulness:  
I thought no more of failure, pain, and death,  
No more I dreaded weakness and distress.

Far, far away the glistening billows gleamed,  
A-splendor with the summer's silver light;  
And, looking seaward, blissfully I dreamed  
Of balmy islands somewhere out of sight.

And fondly still, with kisses warm and sweet,  
The breezes wooed me to a calm content;  
While ocean, sounding softly at my feet,  
Its tuneful charm to the half-silence lent.

So with me ever, as I weary stand,  
And look far out upon the waters wide,  
I catch some hint, in all the breezes bland,  
Of shady isles that somewhere yonder hide.

Where now I wait, a dreary waste may be,  
With no green thing to glad my longing eyes:  
Far, far before, across the sounding sea,  
Are hid the balmy eyes of Paradise.

As she read, her quick soul caught the cry of unrest  
Welling up through the words, from a hungering breast,  
And went answering out; for she stood, as it seemed,  
By a waste of wild water whose billows ne'er gleamed  
With the light of a sail bringing gladness and peace;



And she longed, with a longing that never might cease  
Till she neared their glad haven of infinite calm  
And content, for the Paradise Islands of Balm.  
Could it be that across the wide deep, and beyond  
All its possible shipwreck, there waited the fond  
Wooing breezes of faith and of love? Would they seem  
To her ever as more than a vanishing dream?  
Would she find in their lingering kisses a quiet  
From doubt and distrust that forever ran riot  
Within her? Would hunger of heart, and the pain



Of unsatisfied want, and the wearisome reign  
Of regret, have an end?

So she questioned, and read  
Yet again and again the brief stanzas that led  
To a vision of loneliness dreary:—

A man

Standing there by the sea where the sand-reaches ran  
To slip under its waves and be hidden from view;  
Far before him the shimmering billows of blue  
Blending on with the tint of the sky; not a sail  
In the distance to hint of a cheer-giving hail;  
Not a bird flying over, with glint of its wings  
To recall the sweet song that some dear singer sings;  
And behind him no hills with their glories of green,  
And a ribbon of silver soft winding between;  
Only dull, level reaches of dry, barren sand  
Sloping up from the sea, with no sign of the hand  
Of a fellow in sight, not a house, nor a tree,  
Only solitude, silence, and dreariness; he,  
With his hungering eyes, looking out on the main,  
With a longing of soul like the passionate pain  
Of a lover unloved,—looking out to behold  
Far away in the future, whose billows have rolled  
Weary years at his feet, the fulfilment of life,  
The incoming of love, like a peace after strife  
Of long lasting, the ultimate gladness of time  
Where the gladness and peace are forever sublime.

You may read all she read without seeing as much  
As she saw: it may be that the delicate touch  
Of her fancy is wanting; the mood that was hers  
May not move you with sensitive impulse that stirs  
To each breath of expression; no absolute need  
May possess you, and hold you, till all that you read,

While you thrill in its holding, gives hint of reply  
And revealing. The fact matters not.

By and by

She arose from her vision, came back to herself,  
And the volume laid carelessly by on a shelf.  
"It is idle," she thought, "to make semblance of woe  
In this fashion. No rhymes of a verse-maker show  
His true feeling: the major was right." And she smiled.  
"This new poet my sympathy quick has beguiled  
Without any deserving. It may be he missed  
For a moment the touch of some lips he had kissed  
Long ago; or it may be he felt but a blind,  
Common craving for something beyond; or his mind  
May have taken the most of its dolorous tone  
From a liver disordered; or even my own  
Vital organs may suffer," — but, looking across  
To the opposite mirror, she noted no loss  
Of the color of health in her beautiful face,  
And she laughed at the fanciful thought.

For the space

Of a half-hour she sat there alone in the room,  
Till the shadows of twilight had gathered to gloom,  
In a reverie deep. The rare smile faded out,  
Giving place to a look as of questioning doubt;  
And the eyes that had warmed many hearts with their glow  
Had a tenderer light, as if tear-drops could flow  
Without warning. Again she was living the past,  
With no cloud of regret o'er its loveliness cast;  
But just ready to bloom were her roses of youth:  
She had faith in herself, she believed in the truth,  
She could trust in her kind.

To be true to the best  
That is in us, nor falter nor fail in the test,

Let whatever may come,—this is measurement just  
Of the sum of our life ; to keep safely in trust  
All the good that we have, and to answer at length  
For our being and doing, the weakness or strength  
Of our hope and our help in the varying strife,—  
There is nothing beside in this problem of life.

Had she faltered and failed in the test we have named ?  
If she had, by the perfect alone be she blamed.  
It is easy to falter and stumble and fall ;  
But a pitiful God is the Father of all.





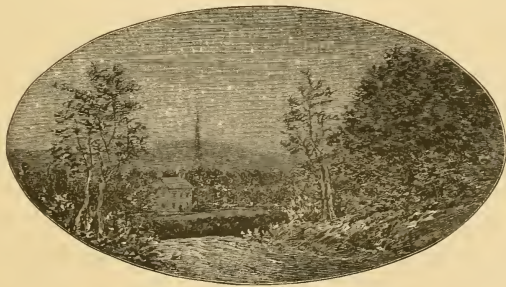
### III.

MY OWN GERALDINE HOPE,—

“It is far in the night ;  
But I’m wakeful and restless, and so  
I will write  
A few words for your reading before  
I retire.

I have had a long evening, yet short.

“My desire  
For an audience large and attentive was met ;  
I have never faced one more inspiring yet.  
When I rose to my feet, the same tremor possessed me,  
The same idle terrors inthrall’d and oppress’d me,  
That often I feel in the face of a crowd ;  
But they vanished, so soon as I, trembling, had bow’d,  
And had utter’d a word.



“It is regal to stand  
And to sway every will with a wave of your hand,  
Or a shade of your voice. It is gladness supreme  
To be thrilled for a time to the final extreme  
Of your consciousness, through the quick thrill of your  
speech,  
And to know of a certainty strong that you reach  
And take hold of the hearts of your hearers; to feel  
Their quick thrilling responsive; to know they are leal  
To the kingship within you.

“The gift that is mine,  
To a certain extent, is a dower divine,  
And I shrink from its use, I confess, now and then.  
It is such a grand mission,—to move upon men,  
To determine their thought and their faith, to impel  
Them to action, to guide and direct them, to tell  
Where they miss the true path, where the pitfalls may wait,  
To beget stronger love for the right, stronger hate  
For the wrong. And, however we work, at the best  
It is little we do that is well; for the rest,  
May we lightly be judged!

“I began to recite  
The events of the evening. Pray pardon the flight  
Of my pen in this manner.

“The lecture was long,  
But was brief to my thinking. I found in the throng  
Of intelligent faces a few like your own,—  
Of the answering sort, that one seems to have known  
A long time; that respond to whatever you say  
In a hearty and very encouraging way;  
That a speaker soon learns to pick out here and there,  
And to give them, perhaps, an unduly large share  
Of his special attention. He reads the effect  
Of his argument in them; he comes to expect

For his favorite thoughts recognition from these  
 That the mass may not give : it would seem that he sees  
 Not the many who hear him, but only the few  
 Who respond.

“By the side of a man whom I knew  
 Years ago was a face of this type (not a face  
 To be quickly forgotten when met), with a grace  
 As of sorrow outgrown, but remembered,—a glow  
 Of unconscious expression illuming it so  
 As almost to transfigure it often. It had  
 A half-hungering look in repose, as if sad  
 Were the soul underneath it. 'T is needless to add  
 'T was a woman's,—a wife's or a widow's you'd guess  
 Without reasoning why ; not because there is less  
 Of the sweetness of girlhood within it, but more  
 Of the woman's completeness of beauty.

“Before  
 I had finished my lecture, I half comprehended  
 The secret hid under the face, and befriended  
 The womanly need, that so eagerly cried  
 In a speechless appeal to be soul-satisfied,  
 In my thought. When the lecture had come to an end,  
 And the people were slowly departing, her friend  
 Major Mellen presented me to her.

“I've mentioned  
 The major, perhaps ? He's a clever-intentioned,  
 Uncertain, erratic, and cynical man,  
 Who will ridicule always whatever he can ;  
 Who is recreant, either in word or in fact,  
 To all truth ; who can never make up what he lacked  
 As a boy, when I knew him at first,—a true sense  
 Of respect for things holy ; who sees a pretence  
 In all earnestness, looks for deceit or a lie  
 In all candor, and laughs, with a tear in his eye,

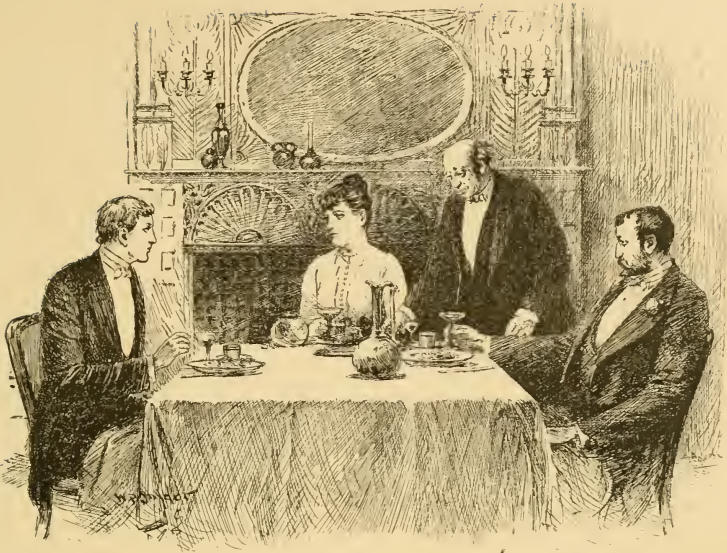
At all sentiment sober ; a man whom I shrink  
From at times, yet who often compels me to think  
That I like him, so shrewd are his comments, so keen  
Is the wit that he flashes. I never have seen  
Any human enigma more puzzling than he,  
And I'm glad you don't know him, my dear.

“ Mrs. Lee

Is a woman of wit and of rare repartee,  
With a lightness of speech that quite often belies  
The suggestion of sorrow that lurks in her eyes.  
They insisted that I should go with them to supper  
(She lives, let me say, in the style of the Upper  
Ten Thousand, who dine very late, and sit down  
To their tea at a time when the rest of the town  
Is asleep) : I accepted, in hopes that a walk  
In the chilly night air, and the major's bright talk  
For an hour afterward, would beguile me to sleep.  
And the major was witty and droll, if not deep,  
Making odd little turns of the points of my speech,  
And applying them oddly and keenly, till each  
Of us laughed to the echo.

“ The widow laughs well  
(She's a widow, I know, though I could n't quite tell  
How I know it) ; has read the best authors in prose  
And in poetry, current and classic, and knows  
When to quote them and how, which is rather uncommon,  
I'm tempted to say, nowadays, in a woman.

“ A right merry season we had at the table :  
I know 't would amuse you in turn, were I able  
To write out the many bright things that were said.  
But all wit loses sparkle and glow when it's read,  
And I'm not very good, I confess, at repeating  
The many *bon-mots* that I hear at a meeting



Like this, of a few who have sharpened their wits  
By long practice.

“I fancy the god of mirth sits  
With his soul in the shadow, just ready to weep;  
For so many I know, who in company keep  
The whole roomful a-roar, are yet closest akin  
To the pathos of being, and oft enter in  
To the innermost temple of sorrow, where tears  
Never gather and fall, and no grief of the years  
Ever voices itself to the world. The great woe  
Of a life (or I sometimes have reasoned it so)  
May not be a great loss that it ever has known,  
But a very great want that has silently grown  
From an undefined need to the mastering strength  
Of a hunger unfed, and that sways one at length  
With an absolute will,—not a grief to be told

To a friend with a sigh, but to have and to hold  
All unshared to the end.

“But enough of my fancies.

You'll come to believe that a hidden romance is  
Beneath this new face I have met, if suggestion  
Of sorrow be followed up thus. Beyond question  
The woman has suffered,—a quite common case,  
Very likely, though hers *is* an uncommon face;  
And it may be her life has known nothing of lack  
But in losing. I've promised to call, going back  
From the West, and may more of her history learn.

“It is far in the night, and to sleep I must turn,  
For my eyelids are heavy at last. May my dreams  
Be of you and your love! Amid much that but seems  
What it is not, I know that my darling is true  
As the truth I believe and proclaim; and to you  
The unrest of my heart ever turns for content:  
So be tender and true to

“Your

“PERCIVAL TRENT.”





#### IV.



O he called, as he promised, again and again ;  
And she met him with grace very charming.

Few men

Ever failed to be won by the winning re-  
pose

Of her manner, to strong admiration. The  
close

Of each call came too soon. He would gladly have stayed

Even longer, although it is true he delayed

His departure to etiquette's limits extreme.

He had met many women ; had thought one supreme

O'er them all for her beauty, her sweetness, and grace :

But a charm quite elusive shone out of this face

That so puzzled his reading ; a winsomeness new

In its every expression his interest drew ;

And the touch of her hand as she bade him adieu

Was magnetic.

Their talk was of places and books

At the first. He had been in some half-hidden nooks

Of the world, and, describing their beauties, would glow

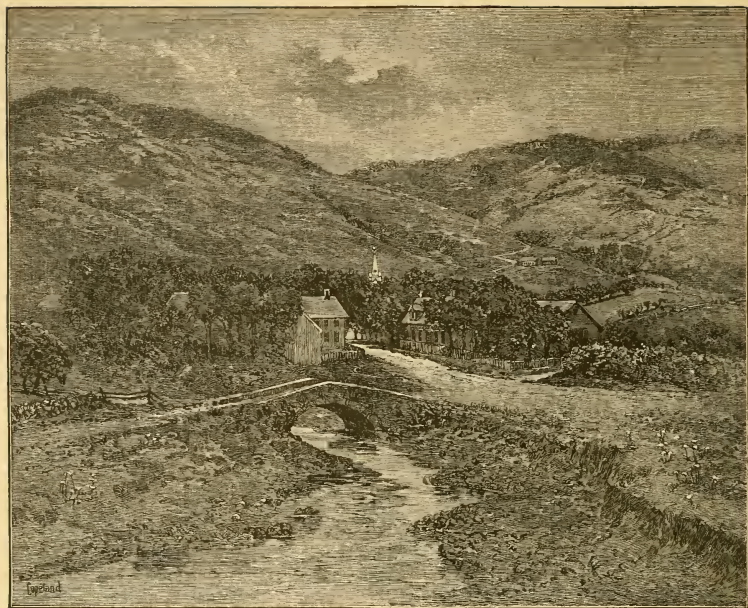
With their memories rare. 'T was his fortune to know

Men and women who write what the rest of us read ;

And a word about books would so easily lead

To some personal gossip, they finally fell

Into serious thought as to what the books tell



Of the life and the love of their authors.

“I doubt

If women or men ever write much without  
Weaving in their own story,” she said. “I believe  
In reality rather than fiction. Deceive  
As some may the great public, who readily yield  
To fictitious profession, there must be concealed  
In each novel or poem that touches the heart,  
And takes hold of the sympathies strongest, a part  
Of the writer’s own being and doing.”

“I hold

To another opinion. The poet is bold  
In his fancy; the novelist free in the flight  
Of imaginings many,” he answered with quite



An emphatic expression, yet speaking as one  
 Who was weighing his words. "And, when you have begun  
 To determine where poet and novelist blend  
 With the persons they picture, there's never an end  
 To the questions arising; for either may be  
 As prolific in different pictures as he  
 Who is painting the crowd as they come. So diverse  
 Are the characters shown, that it couldn't be worse—  
 As a failure, I mean—if the painter should try  
 To be each of the persons he's painted. And why  
 Should we single out one of the many portrayed,  
 And declare that this one of the many is made  
 Of the poet's own life, or the novelist's?"

"Now

You have taken to argument, I must allow  
 That my view appears weak," she returned with a laugh.  
 "But a woman ought never to argue; for half  
 That she knows is beyond demonstration. She feels  
 It to be, and so knows it to be; and conceals  
 Or confesses her meagre resources for knowing,  
 As moved by her whim. Yet there may be a showing  
 Of reason in what I have felt to be so.  
 Out of nothing no thing has been made, as we know,  
 That is good. Can a poet produce out of nought  
 What is living and real?"

She paused.

"But his thought

Is a something," he said, "and from this he produces  
 The beings that live and that love. In the uses  
 Of forms he is led to make copy of men  
 And of women he sees round about him; but when  
 He breathes into them soul, it is never the soul  
 Of another, not even his own."

"Then the whole

Of his work is from fancy alone? If he write  
With a heartache that throbs into words, 't is the flight  
Of his fancy-led thought, not a passionate cry  
Out of sorrow he feels? And the many who sigh  
As they read him are wasteful of sympathy?"

Less

Of doubt did her words than her manner express,  
And he felt that she studied him, striving to learn  
Rather more than his answers might yield, in return  
For her questions.

"Perhaps I should hardly declare  
What you say to be true altogether. A share  
Of the woe of the world may creep into its verse  
Or its prose; but I doubt if a man will rehearse  
Any grief of his own while a grief it remains.  
He may journey beyond it, may think of its pains  
As a thing of the past, and may write of it then  
With a sort of contempt for its sacredness. When  
It is part of to-day, he will shut it away  
From the gaze of the crowd. I admit that he may  
Seem to write of what is in the present, that urges  
The blood in his heart to impetuous surges:  
The heart may be throbbing, perchance, while he writes  
What your sympathy moves, your emotion excites,  
But from sympathy just like your own. He may feel,  
When he writes with a heartache he does not conceal,  
To the full the deep sorrow he breathes; but be sure  
'T is a grief that is fleeting, that will not endure,  
That is born of his fancy,—the same as your own  
While you read. And why not? Is the reader alone  
To be moved by the syllables tender, the sobs  
Welling up? I am certain the writer's heart throbs  
Over sorrows of fancy as if they were true  
And intense as the bitterest life ever knew."

“And how, then, may it be with his longings? Are these  
But the sigh of a moment, the breath of a breeze  
Of desire blowing over him? Nothing he holds  
Until it into beauty of being unfolds,  
And makes glad some great need of his heart?”

Then he smiled.

“Are you striving with logical art  
Thus to prove me all wrong? It is in my beliefs  
That the sorrow of sorrows, the grief of all griefs,  
Is the sorrow, the grief, of a mastering need.  
Yet a poet may syllable this; and indeed  
I’ve no doubt that the longings of poets are real  
As things that they long for are vague and ideal.  
’Tis here that they reach after beauty and light  
Far beyond and above all that gladdens their sight  
In the present; and thus they uplift the whole race  
With their longing and hoping and striving.”

His face

Growing earnest, she waited expectant.

“To long  
For some good that we have not is noble. The song  
That incites to proud doing was penned with some hill  
Of endeavor uprising before; and the will  
To win glory and crowning sprang out of desire:  
They only grow helpful and strong who aspire.  
There is only one road to the mountains of bliss,  
And it leads from the levels of longing.”

“But this  
Is a general view you are taking,” she said,  
Interrupting him here with a smile. “I have read  
Of some longings more special: their voice, like a call  
From a hungry soul, on my heart seemed to fall,  
And to wake a response. It was want crying out

To the plenty of life to be filled."

"Beyond doubt  
You have heard such a cry. Every soul not ascetic  
Does hear it. The want of the world, so pathetic,  
So broad, comprehends and embraces all needs;  
Individual, hidden, and silent. The greeds  
Of the world are past naming; the hunger and thirst  
By which men are so often and sorely accursed  
Are as legion: yet some one shall cry of his lack,  
And at once the sad voices come echoing back,  
As if truly this one had thus spoken for each,  
When he wants what perchance may abound within reach  
Of the rest, and they think it is nought."

"But there may  
Be a want that is common to many. The sway  
Of one mastering need, as you term it, may be  
As supreme within you as it is within me:  
It may hold just as firmly all sensitive souls.  
We walk different paths; but the very same goals  
Are to gladden us all by and by."

"But no twain  
Are exactly alike in their longing. The pain  
Of a wearing unrest in each heart is a thing  
By itself, as by self to be borne. One may sing  
A glad pæan of praise that the many outring  
In re-echoing notes; but the song they are ringing  
Had something his own, while his gladness was singing,  
It lacks from the lips of another.

"I stand  
By the oneness of each in himself. As the hand  
That I hold to the world is my own, though it bear  
A good gift of which all may claim portion and share;  
So the poet may bring of his riches to such  
As are needy, and each may be richer by much,

In the taking of what was his right, as it seems,  
 Out of common bestowal. But longings and dreams  
 That embody the gift are the poet's alone :  
 They are harvest, perhaps, of some seed he has sown  
 In the past. And no life may be like his so near  
 As to garner the same from its sowing."

"I fear  
 You are thinking too broadly to touch the one thought  
 I have had, and to answer it now. I have sought  
 To be sure of too much," she replied. "Let it go  
 Till I've pondered it further. You certainly know  
 Of my right as a woman to have the last word.  
 What you say may be true: if it be, I have erred  
 In conceding to poets the commoner woes  
 That afflict and make sad. I am bound to suppose  
 That you know of the facts." And he saw she had tired  
 Of their soberer talk, and so simply desired  
 By mild badinage now to glide off from the theme.

He but laughed, and made merry.

"To-night, if I dream  
 Of some hunger of heart," he remarked, as he said  
 His adieu, "I shall know an invisible thread  
 From the heart of another my hungering thrills ;  
 That my want is the twin of your own ; that our wills  
 Are akin, and our needs ?"

He was reading her eyes  
 As he, bantering, questioned her thus for replies  
 That her tongue might not syllable. Nothing outshone  
 From their depths that gave answer complete.

"I have known  
 What it is to be hungry of soul," she replied,  
 Speaking gravely again: "so have you, and, beside  
 Us, a host of the men and the women who greet

The gay world with a smile. It is easy to cheat  
The blind mass into thinking we're glad and content.  
It is hard to walk on with what fate may have sent  
For your company,—hunger and doubt and unrest,—  
And yet keep the heart steady that beats in your breast;  
It is hard to feel lonesome for love that is kind  
To the uttermost, tender and trustful, and blind  
To your ugliness, quick to discover your need,  
And a spendthrift in giving itself."

"May I plead  
For one boon?" said he eagerly: "this,—be my friend,  
As I'd like to be yours. Let me make some amend,  
If I may, for the lack that you feel now and then,  
And regret. I'll be frank: there is much that some men  
Could bestow that I have not; the all I can give  
Is but little,—a friendship that pledges to live  
While you care for it, sympathy certain and strong,  
And perchance here and there the glad note of a song  
In your life as you find the way weary and sore.  
I would give nothing less: I can give nothing more."

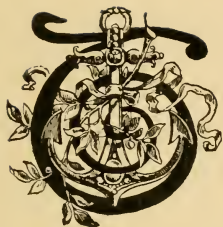
"It is much," she responded, "far more than you think.  
When a wayfarer thirsty is given to drink  
From a brook where the many may come and be filled,  
He is glad as if never another were thrilled  
By its current of blessing."

She held out her hand,  
And the pressure he gave it returned.

"Understand,  
We are friends while you wish it. Good-night."

For what came  
In the track of all this they were hardly to blame.  
There's a logic in life that is stubborn as fate:  
We must learn it, each one, though our study be late.

## V.



HAT Geraldine Hope was indeed a  
coquette,  
Not a few were persuaded who met her,  
and yet  
Without reason sufficient. Her smile,  
it is true,

Was bewitching, and freely bestowed. Then she knew  
How to charm in those delicate ways that suggest  
A particular feeling of interest. Pressed  
For some cause for their thought as concerning her, these  
Who esteemed her the least were at fault. By degrees  
As they knew her the better, they came to see under  
The manner so winning at times, and to wonder  
At womanly graces disclosed, at the will  
To be helpful and brave; and they wondered until  
They were champions grown of her truth.

She had been  
Greatly flattered and praised; and to please, and to win  
Admiration, was easy. She studied no arts,  
But was just her own natural self. If the hearts  
Of men yielded her homage unsought, none could say  
That she won it to scorn, or that he was the prey  
Of deceit and delusion. No lover was pained  
By the loss of a love that he never had gained  
But in idle profession.



The woman's soul in her  
Was noble and true. To be won, he must win her  
With truth and nobility equal, who brought  
Her his heart and his life, and her heart and life sought.  
And, beside, she must feel that he stood just above  
Her in being and doing, whose life and whose love  
Could be worthful and sweet, and in nothing below.  
So she waited in faith, not unwilling to go  
Through the years quite alone, if instead she must lean  
On an arm that was lower. .

And thus Geraldine  
By her suitors abundant had failed to be won,  
Until Percival Trent, who had lately begun  
To be known of the world, came to know her, and hold  
Her supreme among women. His loving controlled  
Her as never another's had done. He was king  
Among men, in her sight, from the first; and the ring  
That he gave her at last she would wear to the end,  
Never doubting.

If love could forever but lend  
To its object the glow of perfection, how sure  
Would all pledges of constancy be to endure!  
"Love is blind," men have said; but they gravely mistake  
Who believe so. Alas that it is not! The ache  
That is born of regret would not vex and make sad,  
If true love could not see; and a world would be glad  
If no loving looked through the too common disguise  
Of the thing winning love, and with grief-welling eyes  
Saw the faults that lie under. We sorrow to find  
That our friends are unworthy; and love is unkind  
For revealing the fact, with its vision so clear,  
That each life has its blemishes. Love may appear  
As unseeing as marble, yet quiver with pain  
From beholding so much; and the bitterest bane



Of the years will be found, as we learn what they teach,  
 In the knowledge that love gave a glamour to each ;  
 That the beauty we saw could not always abide,  
 Nor the veil of our faith all deformity hide.

Had she trusted too much in  
     this man who so held  
 All her life in his hand ? who  
     so surely compelled

Her to trust him and love him ?

Not hers was the question :  
 No doubt troubled her, nor the  
     faintest suggestion

Of doubt. He was hers ; she  
     was his. Before God

They were wedded forever. Their  
     way might be broad

In the future, or narrow : it  
     could not prevent

Them from walking together in happy content  
 To the gate that leads out of this being. Beyond  
 There should dawn an eternity, never less fond  
 In its faith and its love ; and the bliss of her dream  
 Should be endless at last where all love is supreme.

So she thought. To his questioning letter she made  
 An unquestioning answer : —

“ Dear heart, I ’m afraid  
 You are working too hard, and need rest. By and by  
 You will smile at the dread you have named, as do I.  
 There is nothing to fear in a love that is strong  
 And content as is ours. If the time should be long  
 Ere I see you again, I should never once doubt ;  
 If long years should roll by us uncertain, without



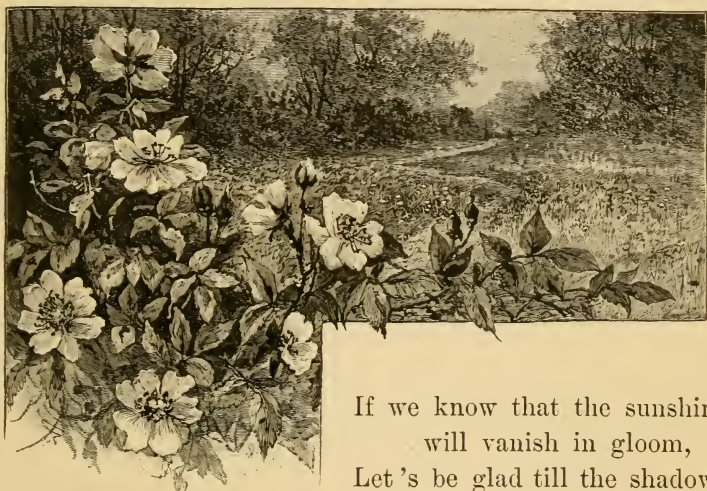
Bringing word of remembrance from you, I should know  
There were reason for silence, and patiently go  
Up and down at my duties, in trust. If a living,  
Abiding affection is formed, the up-giving  
Is perfect, of life and of faith: there can be  
Neither question nor fear. As for you and for me,  
We rely on a love that is higher by much  
Than our own to mould ours, and to keep it. The touch  
Of this love so divine adds a quality rare  
To our own; makes it pure beyond any compare  
With the commoner loves; makes it lasting and sweet  
And immortal.

“I think there can be no defeat  
For a love that is guarded by trust. It withstands  
Every effort of cruel and violent hands  
To dethrone it; it rules with a wonderful might,  
Born of weakness and yielding; it strives for no right  
But the right to bestow of its largess; it speaks  
With an eloquent tongue, in a silence that seeks  
But to hear the dear words of bestowal; it waits  
For the gladness of time that its faith antedates,  
And is glad in its waiting; it patiently bears  
Every strain of the years, all the grief and the cares  
They may bring; it is faithful and true to the end:  
And we know such a love, I am certain, my friend.

“As for duty, that’s God speaking plainly to each  
Of his work in the world; and the wider the reach  
Of your effort, the more you are doing for men,  
Then the sweeter will be your reward. So what, then,  
Does it matter concerning a duty to come?  
Every morrow grows out of to-day; and the sum  
Of the future is made from the present. Whatever  
The morrow may bring will depend on endeavor

Put forth by us now. If to-day we are strong  
 In the right, need we fear that a possible wrong  
 In the future will find us unwilling and weak?

“Let the way that we journey be rugged and bleak  
 By and by: we may smile as we wander to-day  
 Where the roses are blowing, and fancy the way  
 Is forever to lead amid beauty and bloom.



If we know that the sunshine  
     will vanish in gloom,  
 Let's be glad till the shadows  
     are on us.

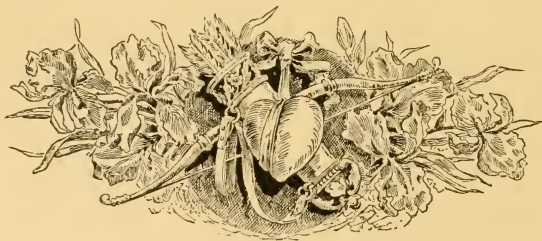
“No man

And no woman of right should the coming time scan  
 With foreboding. The present is ours; and the rest —  
 That is God's. He will care for his own as is best;  
 And our watching is worthless, our dread is in vain.  
 Are we moulded to suffer? The possible pain  
 Will not easier seem for expecting it. Waits  
 Any wretchedness for us? The hardest of fates  
 May be sweetened by love and a song of good cheer,

Like a psalm in the night.

“ There is nothing so clear  
To me ever, dear heart, as that strength will be lent,  
If we ask it, to bear what the Lord shall have sent ;  
And that every hard duty will find us with strength  
To attempt, and indeed overcome it, at length,  
If we cling to the Giver of strength, nor let go  
When the weakest we feel. For I'm certain, I *know*,  
That the weakest may hold to God's hand with a grip  
That is ever unyielding, if only the lip  
Can say, ‘ Help me, O Father ! ’ so quickly he hears,  
And so soon is he touched by our need and our tears.”

Such a faith is a treasure of blessing : it yields  
The sweet waters of peace in the barrenest fields.  
She will need all the help that it offers to cope  
With the want of her morrow — poor Geraldine Hope !



## VI.



MAJOR MELLEN had business in Rivermet ; leisure,  
When business was done, to bethink  
him of pleasure.  
He called upon Geraldine Hope, —  
“ Just to show  
That I have not forgotten that summer, you know,  
When we met at the Hills,” he remarked.

With a trifle  
Of speech she replied, as if willing to stifle  
His thought of the past.

“ It is ages since then,”  
He resumed. “ I have waited for fate once again  
To be kind, but in vain — until now.”

“ You believe,  
Then, in fate ?” she abruptly inquired.

“ Yes, I grieve  
To admit that I do,” was the answer, a touch  
Of distrust in his manner ; “ that is, quite as much  
As I’m prone to believe in things ever. They say  
I’m a heretic born, and have wandered away  
From all faith in the good and the true. It’s a libel  
Of course.” And he laughed. “ I’ve a beautiful Bible  
I read every day — when the weather is fine.  
(You may open your eyes at this statement of mine

In mute wonder.) The book is as broad as the sky,  
And as old as the world. If a poet, I'd try  
To repeat the sweet promises in it, to tell  
What it says to me often, so wondrously well  
That I listen enrapt; but I have n't the gift  
Of expression. There's Trent —"

At this mention the swift-  
Coursing blood from her heart, leaping into her cheek,  
Told him more than all words that her loving might speak;  
But he seemed not to heed the quick witness.

"His tongue

Or his pen, for the sweetest of songs ever sung,  
Could find words in my Bible, I'm certain. The book  
Is the richest I know; and who wishes can look  
At it even as I do, with longing to learn  
All its lessons and secrets. I turn and return  
To its pages each summer with pleasure intense."

They were often beset with perplexing suspense  
Of his meaning and purpose, who listened to him;  
And she heard him run on, with a consciousness dim  
That he might have a motive in speaking, not quite  
To be seen at the outset.

"That week of delight  
In the mountains, when fate was so winningly kind  
As to show me your face, I was never less blind  
To the beauties the Bible of Nature revealed,  
And I revelled in loveliness. Forest and field  
Had a charm for me new. Every mountain-top shone  
With a marvellous glory. I think, had I known  
'Twas the very last week of my life, I'd have cared  
Not at all. I am seldom ecstatic; I've fared  
At the best and the poorest so often, I hold  
By philosophy cool, as a rule; but the gold



Of that summer week's gilding is bright even yet:  
I must live through a lingering age to forget  
All the glamour and glow of those days that went past  
Like a dream of content."

"Was that summer the last  
That you saw of the Hills?"

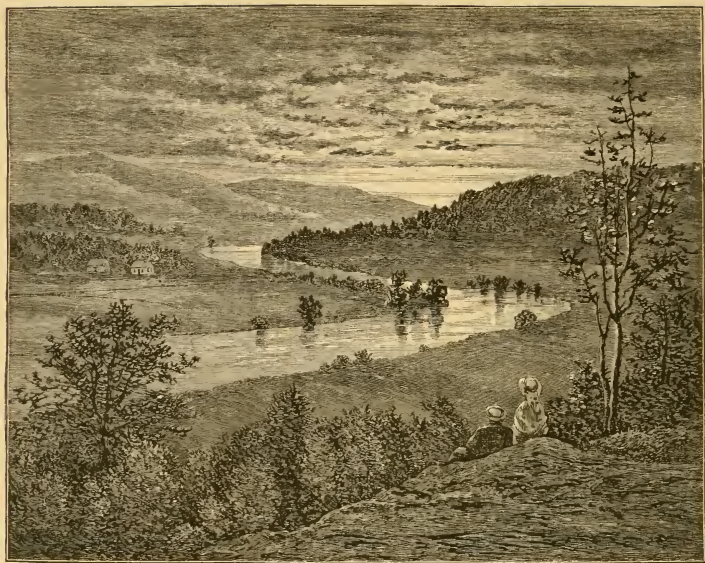
She was puzzled to tell  
What to think of his words and his manner. So well  
She remembered his cynical smile and his sneer,  
Half-disguised, at all sentiment tender, and dear  
To the sensitive heart, she could hardly accept  
What he uttered as earnest.

"I could not have kept  
My first love for the Hills,—for those Hills,—had I been  
There again. The one visit was all. It's a sin  
To defraud any pleasure, of sight or of deed,  
By repeating it. One of the rules that I heed  
Is to go only once to a place, if I go  
For mere pleasure alone; and, remembering so  
But the freshness and zest of my pleasure most keen,  
There is nothing to me that is common, I mean,  
In the matter of scenic delight."

"You forget  
That last evening we waited to see the sun set  
On the top of Mount Vision," she said in reply.  
"You were silent a while; but the glow of the sky  
Was reflected, I thought, in the glow of your face.  
You had seen the same picture; the very same grace  
Of superlative beauty in color and tone  
Had beguiled you again and again—"

"But it shone  
In a different light; it was not the same view;  
It had different tints, and a different hue  
Over all from the sunsets we commonly see.





And, moreover, two sunsets are never to me  
Just alike. They are even diverse as the features  
Of men in expression. The creeds of the preachers  
Can vary no more. But your lakes and your hills,  
Your meadows and mountains, your rivers and rills,  
Are the same to the end of the chapter: they yield  
Nothing fresh for renewed admiration; revealed  
Is the sum of their beauty at first to your eyes:  
They are changeless, in short. But the sea and the skies,—  
These are changeful as man, and, because of their change,  
As bewitching as woman.”

“Such talk would seem strange  
From another than you, Major Mellen, indeed.  
I am puzzled by logic that lightly can lead

To conclusion like yours. You would find your delight  
In the face of a stranger; and even the sight  
Of a friend would be wearisome, just in degree  
As the friend were familiar to you."

"It might be  
As you say," he responded, "if 't were not the fact,  
As I've hinted, that faces do change; and an act,  
Or a thought, or a hope, or a feeling, may bring  
A new face in the old. But your bird there may sing  
A new song, though he change not a feather; and thus  
May our friend, though he change not the smile he gives us,  
Be as changeful in words as the sky is in looks,  
Have as varying moods as the sea, or the books  
Of the poets."

"Perhaps,"—and she paused, as if shrinking  
From saying too much,—“it may be we are thinking  
Diversely. I never am positive whether  
Your words and your thoughts run exactly together.  
You like to combat and discuss, and draw out  
The beliefs and the fancies of others. I doubt  
If you fully accept all you freely imply.  
Now, to me, every mountain takes glow from the sky  
That it kisses, or sombreness wears like a frown  
When the mists and the shadows fall heavily down;  
Every meadow lights up by the sun, as a face  
Might be glorified, seen in some radiant place;  
Every lake but reflects what the sky above shows,—  
Either sunlight or shadow; it sparkles and glows,  
Or is angry from touch of the winds, or is still  
As the spring that begets yonder musical rill  
In its home in the wild. I see changes in all  
That are beautiful. None of these ever can pall  
On my vision."

He often had seen her as now,



With the pink of her cheek and the white of her brow  
Yet the stronger in contrast, from feeling that urged  
The quick blood through her veins till it rippled and surged  
In her face. He had often beguiled her to think  
In expression as earnest, that thus he might drink  
Of her glowing delight in the lovely and true :  
'T was a pleasure surprising, peculiar, and new,  
Thus to put her in eager defence of her thought,  
Till her beauty, with something mysterious fraught,  
Had a charm that was rare. He had wearied of much  
That men fancy is pleasant ; but here was a touch  
Of delight that he could not explain. He could smile  
At the commoner pleasures with which men beguile  
The dull days. But some influence hidden, unguessed,  
Was upon him, and gave to each moment a zest  
That was fresh and unfailing, as, scanning her face,  
He could study her feeling and thought, and could trace  
Every turn of her fancy, each questioning doubt.  
He had keen intuition, and saw much without  
Any effort at seeing ; was quick to divine  
Every meaning that lurked in a glance or a sign ;

And made use of his sceptical questions and sneers  
To uncover the souls of his friends.

“It appears

To me certain *you’ve* read in my Bible,” he said,  
With a laugh not too mocking, “although you have read  
With a thought of your own running on with the theme  
Of the text. *You* can linger and listen and dream  
In the woods and the fields like a poet, — or, yes,  
Like a man of the world who forever finds less  
In the world to his fancy, except it be far  
From the din — and the dinners. You certainly are  
Of the order of poets yourself, to behold  
Such a glow of the new in a shade of the old.  
You should marry a poet, Miss Hope, who could see  
With such eyes as your own — if there happen to be  
Any man of so wealthy endowment.”

She blushed

At the words and the look, and unconsciously crushed  
A wild rose she had held in her hand. Had he heard  
What one poet was to her?

“It never occurred

To me, major,” she said, “that the ultimate mission  
A poet may know is to bring the fruition  
Of life to one woman he honors with marriage.  
I may not be right, — and I would not disparage  
The poets, I’m certain, — but poets, as poets,  
Belong, I believe, to all women. I know it’s  
A fact that they marry; but is n’t it fact  
That they wed not as poets? that women attract  
Not the poet, but only a man among men?”

He was puzzled, in turn, for a moment, and then,  
Comprehending that she was but parrying, laughed,  
And let fly, as he fancied, a Parthian shaft.

“No, they *don't* wed as poets: connubial ties  
Would be idle to bind all the passion that lies  
In the heart of a poet. The man may be bound ;  
But the poet is free, and wherever is found  
Any blossoming sweet he may gather it in.  
They are lucky—these poets: they've only to win  
As the men, like us all, and have freedom accorded  
To woo and to win, then, as poets, rewarded  
By beauty and love in most bountiful measure.  
A poet, it seems, has an infinite leisure  
For love, and capacity equal. There's Trent,  
Whom I've named: the good fellow was meant  
For a knight in heroic and chivalrous times  
Quite as much as a minstrel to maunder his rhymes.  
He's the soul of a poet, as all will confess  
Who have heard him and read him; likewise (and not less)  
Is the liberal heart of the poet his own.  
We were intimate friends years ago; but I've known  
Very little about him since then, till of late.  
As a boy in his teens, he'd a singular fate  
For sporadic affection: before he was twenty  
He'd loves half a dozen; it's probable plenty  
Have gladdened him since. It was thought he would wed  
A young lady in Somers; and I have heard said  
He would marry some one in this town.”

“Did you hear  
Who the young lady was?” she inquired with a queer  
Little tremor of voice.

“Now I really forgot  
To inquire,” he replied; “but the fact matters not.  
He's a passion much later than that, I am sure,  
And it may prove more difficult even to cure.  
I have known more than one to meet Isabel Lee  
To his lasting regret. She's a marvel to me



(And a cousin, which means that I know her quite well)  
For her mastery over the men. I could tell,  
When I introduced Trent, what would follow. She knew  
How to rouse his whole interest in her. She drew  
Him again and again, and will draw him, despite  
Any previous fancy, until her delight  
In his presence and passion is over. The hurt  
Will not kill him."

"This woman is, then, but — a — flirt,"  
She remarked, hesitating, to cover the pause  
When he stopped.

"I may say she has given some cause  
To be called so," he answered, a cynical ring  
In his voice; "but she may not intend anything  
That is certain to breed very positive harm.  
She believes in the right of each woman to charm  
As she can. She regards it the duty of each  
To do discipline-work on all hearts within reach.  
She's a woman of women, in short, with a will  
To be wooed for the wooing, not won; to instil  
As much love as she may in the hearts of mankind,  
Which is quite evangelical truly. We find  
That the preachers preach love, of a sort; and the best  
Should be fruiting itself in humanity's breast,  
If occasion there be for the poorest."

He talked  
In a tone that was usual with him, and mocked  
All the meaning his cynical words might have held:  
And she listened with curious feelings, compelled  
To seem anxious as only a woman who heard  
Such allusion to one of her sex as but stirred  
Her own pity indignant. Her face was aflame,  
And she dared not to venture on speaking his name  
Who was more to her even than life.

“It’s a shame,”

She made answer, “for women to be as you say.  
And you libel us all when you speak in that way,  
As if women were all mere coquettes. There are more  
Who give love than are loved; and, if all men but bore  
The respect that they ought for all women, the sex  
Would be nobler and better. You talk but to vex  
Me to earnest defence of my kind: you don’t mean  
What you utter.”

He smiled, the same smile she had seen  
On his face in the past,—half a sneer, half assent  
To a fact he would gladly refute.

“I’m content

Not to argue the question,” he answered, “with one  
Who might point to herself, ere we well had begun,  
As a proof for all women. I gladly cry quits  
At the outset. I never could measure my wits  
With a woman’s in argument. Even to try,  
In this instance, would lose me my train: so good-by.”  
And he rose, and extended his hand.

“Must you go?”

She replied; not too eager, he fancied. “I know  
The young woman—you heard about—here, whom your  
friend

Was to marry,” she went on to say, “and will lend  
Her my ears for the news you have brought, should it seem  
To be worth any while.”

And like one in a dream

She went up to her room, and sat down with her grief  
Over-brooding and weighing upon her. Belief  
In the story to which she had listened was first  
A necessity. All it implied, and the worst,  
She accepted, and tortured herself into pain  
Of the keenest. When day came again, she had lain



On a bed of unrest a long night through ; her throbbing  
Heart weary and tempted, and sore with its sobbing ;  
For the woman within her was quick to take up  
Any bitterness offered, and drink till the cup  
Had been drained to its dregs.

Then some gladness shone in :  
She was wicked to yield to her doubt ; it was sin  
Thus to sorrow and grieve ; if some love she had lost,



There was God, — he would profit her, even at cost  
That was dear. So she reasoned at length ; and she  
prayed

With a tender upgiving that must have delayed  
More than one of God's angels to listen and hear.

And at last, through the clouds, came a radiance clear,  
Till she saw mid her tears the glad rainbow of trust.

When believing came back,—as to some hearts it must,  
Though it leave for a little,—she felt she had done  
A great wrong to her love and to God; and, as one  
Who has grievously sinned, she repented in tears  
Of her sin, till they blinded her doubts and her fears,  
And made way for the sunshine that came.

And how sweet

Is the sunlight that falls on our wandering feet,  
When the morning dawns clear after night of distress  
And we look on a land that our hope may possess  
By and by! Blessed morrow to gladden us all,  
If to-day not a shadow of sunset could fall!



## VII.



HEN Geraldine Hope met her lover  
again,  
She was tenderer even than common.  
To men  
Of his mould it is easy for women  
to yield  
Their caresses and trust. She had  
always revealed

Her whole soul to him freely ; and now she expressed  
With sweet emphasis, sweeter than any possessed  
In articulate language of love, how she rested  
Herself in his heart. It was not that she tested  
His love and his faith : she was certain of these ;  
She had walked from her wilderness dark on her knees.  
It was not that she thought to make certain her strength  
Over him, as of old ; it might happen at length  
That she seem to him weaker than late she had been  
In the sight of herself. It was not that she win  
A new fervor of love. It was simply that he  
Had been wronged in her thought and belief ; and so she  
Made amends as she could.

There are wives who have doubted  
The faith of their husbands for less, and have shouted  
Their doubts to the world, as if virtue must claim  
Its reward on the house-tops, or ally with shame ;  
But this woman, as wedded by love, in the eyes

Of the angels, she knew, as her sister that sighs  
Over vows, and a bridal ring empty of bliss,  
Could seal close into silence her pain with a kiss,  
And remember it only to smile at. She would not  
So much as make question to him; and she could not  
Again feel a question concerning his love,  
She was trustingly sure. And henceforth, far above  
Every statement of cynical doubt, she would bear  
Her belief in his honor and truth. He should share  
The full trust that she gave to her God.

You may know

How she loved, to stand fast and unfaltering so;  
You may guess what her love must have meant to her life,  
When she fought out alone such a wearying strife  
With distrust, and then put it all back in the past,  
That no shadow of conscious unfaith might be cast  
On their future.

Had Percival Trent at this time  
Felt a doubt of his love in return, some sublime  
And unselfish intent must have moved him to hold  
It in check. He was tenderer, too, than of old.  
He looked down in her eyes with his own brimming over  
With truth, and was glad.

“I’ve so long been a rover,”

He said to her soon, “that I hunger for home  
Of my own. Only vagabonds always can roam  
Up and down, as a decade or more I have done,  
Without wearying of it. There’s much to be won  
In the broad world of being I’ve studied so long;  
But I’d rather be singing some ingleside song  
For your heart to be happy in hearing alone,  
Than to win all the praises of men I have known.  
I’ve another long season of labor ahead,  
That will amply provide me with means to buy bread

For us both afterward. You'll be ready to sit  
And preside for us two at the breaking of it?"  
She could be very merry indeed, if she chose,  
And the spirit was on her just now.

"I suppose  
We may have something more," she remarked with a laugh,  
"Than you've mentioned? For me, I must say, even half



Of a loaf would not answer. A little of meat  
And potatoes might make our provision complete."

"It is meet we shall be at our own little board  
By and by," he rejoined, "when my slow-growing hoard



Is increased to the proper proportions. We'll live  
On the peaches and cream of existence, and give  
Of the commoner good to who wants it."

She smiled

At his liberal purpose. She seemed like a child  
In her simple acceptance of pleasures to be,  
And she listened with joy that was winsome to see  
As he glowingly pictured the happy content  
Of some morrow to come.

Surely Percival Trent  
Was a fortunate man. With his mood at its best,  
He was glad as are they in the Valley of Rest  
Who have never a sorrow, and never are sad;  
He could stand on the Mountains of Beulah, as glad  
As if never he groped in the shadows below,  
And the glories of being as truly could know  
On their heights as if down in the depth there were none  
Of its midnight and gloom when the gladness was done.  
Yes, a fortunate man, but more fortunate here,  
On this day of delight, than in many a year,  
If forever, he might be again; for he stood  
On the edge of his Edom, unknowing. The good  
Of the Uplands of Promise could only be gained  
By a wilderness way that was rugged, and stained  
With the blood of its wandering, wearying souls.  
He must go as they journey who seek for the goals  
That are hardest to gain, with no kindness or care  
For himself, only patient, and willing to bear  
All the pain of the days, all their famishing heat.  
May God help him, if ever the manna sent sweet  
From the generous heaven should fail in his need!  
God help all who are seeking their Canaan, and lead  
As he can, with his merciful hand of release,  
By and by, to its infinite plenty and peace!

When they parted at last; Geraldine and her lover,  
The angels of hope seemed to heed them, and hover  
About them with whispers of cheer. It was June;  
And the air, with its murmurous music in tune  
With their sentiments tender, was sweet as a breeze  
From some island of bloom, blowing over the seas  
To a mariner homesick for land. 'T was a time  
To be wed, and not parted. The year in its prime  
Was a redolent glory; the thrill of its bliss  
Added ecstasy rare to the thrill of their kiss  
As he said his farewell.

There are days that are kind  
As a mother to men, showing pathways that wind  
Out and in, like a dream, by some stream of delight,  
Never hinting of aught that they hold to affright;

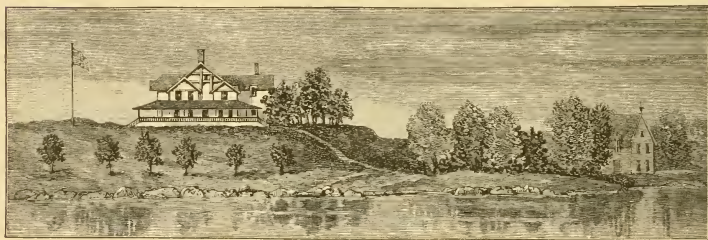


Only luring us on, since the way must be trod,  
Over meadows of green with their velvety sod,  
To the steeps, that are harder to climb, far before.  
There are nights so enchanting, they seem to restore  
The original beauty of Eden; so tender,



They woo every soul to a willing surrender  
Of feverish longing ; so holy, withal,  
That a broad benediction seems sweetly to fall  
On the world.

And these followed with magical sheen,  
The rare sunsets aflame the rich mornings between,  
Giving Percival Trent a new relish for life,  
A new spirit and grace for the struggle and strife  
Of the years. For he went for his summer's brief rest  
Down a river of beauty to Isles of the Blest.



## VIII.



AIR St. Lawrence! What poet has sung  
of its grace  
As it sleeps in the sun, with its smile-  
dimpled face  
Beaming up to the sky that it mir-  
rors? What brush  
Has e'er pictured the charm of the  
marvellous hush

Of its silence, or caught the warm glow of its tints  
As the afternoon wanes, and the even-star glints  
In its beautiful depths? and what pen shall betray  
The sweet secrets that hide from man's vision away  
In its solitudes wild? 'Tis the river of dreams.  
You may float in your boat on the bloom-bordered streams,  
Where its islands like emeralds matchless are set,  
And forget that you live, and as quickly forget  
That they die in that world you have left; for the calm  
Of content is within you, the blessing of balm  
Is upon you forever. Mortality sleeps  
While you dream, an immortal: some mistiness creeps  
Like a veil of forgetfulness over your past,  
And it is not. Your day is eternal, to last  
Without darkness, or change, or the shadow of dread.  
Blessed isles where to-day and to-morrow are wed  
In such fulness of bliss! Blessed river that smiles  
In such beauty and peace by the beautiful isles!



He had dreamed for a week at the Islands, content  
 Without company, glad of each lonely day spent,  
 And shunning the groups that each evening convened  
 At the house where he stopped. But one night, as he  
     leaned

Looking out of his window, some fair sailors singing  
 Far over the water, their sweet echoes ringing  
 But faintly across the dim distance, he heard  
 A clear voice in the portico under, that stirred  
 Him to interest sudden and strong. Could it be  
 That he listened aright? He would walk down and see.  
 There was only one woman who had such a tone,  
 Among all the women he ever had known;  
 Such a mellow outgushing of melody clear  
 As made music of commonplace speech to the ear.  
 When he passed to the portico broad, there was none  
 To be seen whom he knew; for the band had begun  
 Its accustomed performance within the great room

Where the gay ones had gathered: outside was the gloom  
Of an evening whose moon was unrisen. The shout  
Of some fishermen smote the soft air, and died out  
Into silence. The song from the opposite shore  
Had been sung to the end. The soft dip of an oar  
In the water so still was the sum of all sound  
From without. Disappointed, he went the whole round  
Of the ample verandas, expectant, but met  
No reward for his searching, and turned with regret  
To the place where the dancers were waiting.

A bright

Scene it was that he saw,—the large room all alight,  
Happy groups here and there gayly chatting and laughing,  
Here and there a coquette her blind followers chaffing,  
Some silent ones gravely observing or dreaming,  
The glitter of fashion and radiance gleaming  
Throughout. It was strange he had willingly stayed  
From such music and glow as here met him. He made  
His way quietly into the room, and sat down  
To look over the faces,—some sunburned and brown  
From the water and wind, and a few that were tinted  
With color so vivid and strong that they hinted  
Of rouge. There were none he had seen, save at table;  
And out of the tumult, the blare, and the babel  
The band and the people were making, he caught  
Not the one single tone that his listening ear sought:  
Yet he waited, and listened, and almost forgot  
What he came for, and missed. 'Twas his fortunate lot  
To like music so well that it counted for much  
That he wanted; at times making up, with its touch  
As of magic, the lack and the need.

By and by,

When the dancers were weary and still, with a sigh  
He went out, and strolled down to the wharf, where the boats

Lay awaiting the morrow. Some late singer's notes  
Came across to him there from the shadows beyond  
The broad channel, and wooed him to dreams that were  
fond.

But just over the tree-tops the meek moon was hung,  
Her soft lustre illuming the stream; and he swung  
A light skiff from its place, and laid grip on the oars.



He could handle them well. In a moment the shores  
Faded out into dimness; the mammoth hotel  
Was a glittering spot in the night; and he fell  
Into musing profound.

From his boat far away  
To the slow-sailing moon, on the waters there lay  
A broad pathway of gold, for his fancy to take,



And go up to the region of dawn, and there make  
A new morning ideal. The wash of the waves  
On the boatsides was like the low-murmuring staves  
Of a Mendelssohn's Song without Words, and inclined  
Him to utter forgetfulness. Patient, and blind  
To the sins of the world, the pale stars shone above him;  
The balmy night-breezes seemed shyly to love him,  
And kiss him with clinging, affectionate grace;  
And unmindful of time, and unheeding of space,  
He was borne down the current. Some strains of a song  
Floated over him, echoing faintly along  
On the silence; but heard (if at all they were heard),  
As you hear the loud carolling call of your bird,  
Without heeding. His soul had companionless gone  
To the realm of the silent, the land of the dawn.



So he mused and he dreamed; but a-sudden his dreams  
Were all shattered and sunk by the shivering screams  
Of a little steam-yacht that was running him down  
In the stillness and dark.

“He will certainly drown!”

Said a voice in affright, as the vessel's light bow,  
Deftly cutting the deep, slid along on the prow  
Of his boat, and upset it. Dismay seized on all  
In the yacht, and a common and terrified call  
Woke the echoes around.

“Ship ahoy!” said the man  
From his bath in the night. “Lend a line, if you can,  
And I'll right up my boat, and make fast for a tow.”

As he swam to his craft that had floated below,  
He recalled the one voice that had spoken at first,  
And was certain a friend must be near. At the worst,  
He could count on a cold for his droll escapade:  
There was nothing of danger.

The yachtsmen obeyed  
His request, flung a line, and bore round to him quick.

“Come on board!” said the captain. “A very poor trick  
We have played you, whoever you are. Can't be mended  
As *I* see, however: so don't be offended,  
But give us your hand.” And he lifted him up  
To the rail all a-dripping. “A good brimming cup  
Of my brandy will keep you from taking a chill.  
Let me bring you a drink.”

“No, I thank you: I will,  
If an overcoat be at command, accept that;  
And, if some one had only the twin of my hat  
That I left in the water, I think I might wear it.”

“It had n't a brick in to sink it, I'll swear it!”  
Said one of those nearest, outreaching his hand.

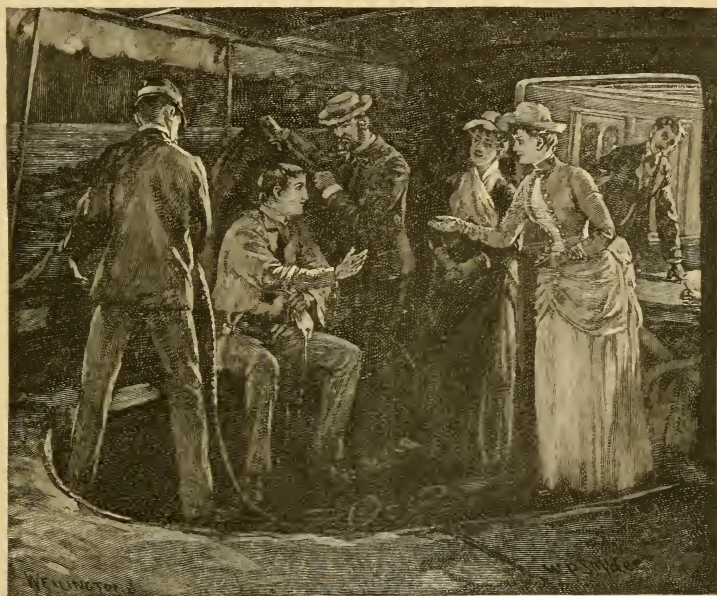
“Is it *you*, Major Mellen? I quite understand  
My disaster at once. Melancholy the place



And occurrence, indeed."

"But you put a good face  
On it, all must admit, Mr. Trent," said the voice  
He had heard. "We must all of us keenly rejoice  
That it ends no more sadly."

"And *you*, Mrs. Lee?  
To bring up in such circle, I'd e'en go to sea,  
As the Wise Men set sail, in a bowl." And he took



The white hand that she offered him warmly. It shook  
With the faintest of tremors.

"Pray pardon me, each,  
For the fright I have caused you. I might make a speech  
To the party, without the least possible fear  
Of (for once) being dry."

“Then pray make it right here  
And just now,” said the major. “Don’t let it go past.  
Such a chance should be met, for it may be the last.  
I present to you, ladies and gentlemen, one  
Who appears on the scene like a genuine son  
Of the sea, Mr. Percival Trent. You have read  
Him in prose and in verse. It has often been said  
That his measures are liquid, the reason is plain:  
He inclines to the liquid himself.”

So the vein  
Of good humor was worked till they landed, and said  
Their good-nights, and betook them to silence and bed.

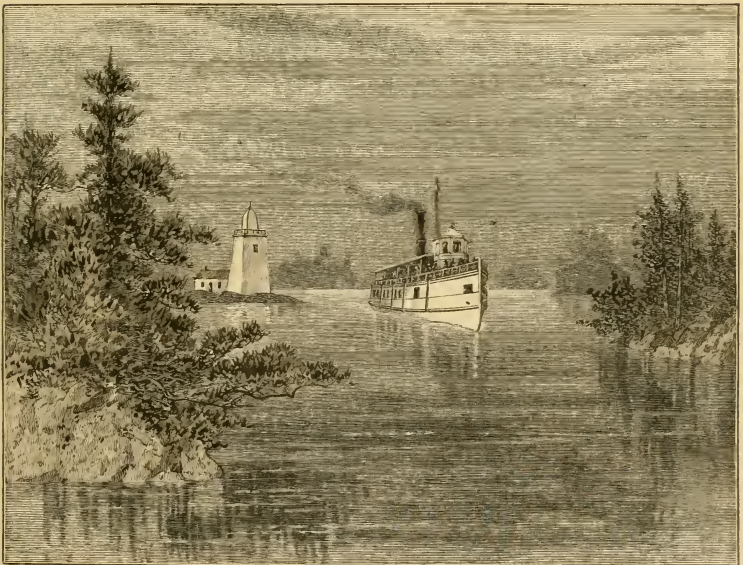


## IX.



It was late the next morning when Percival Trent  
Took his breakfast. At table a message was sent  
To him, asking that he would make one of a number  
To seek the Canadian channel. Sweet slumber

Had rendered but idle all fears of his friends



With regard to his health, as with humor that lends  
A rare aid to digestion, he sauntered below  
To the landing. The party was ready to go,—  
A gay group whom he hardly had noted last night,  
And for whom he cared little to-day. But the sight  
Of his friend Mrs. Lee gave him pleasure afresh.

“Is it, then, really you whom I see in the flesh,”  
She inquired with a smile, “and not simply your spirit,  
That startled us there from the river?”

“I fear it  
Was I in the flesh who so frightened you all,  
As this certainly is; though I seem to recall  
As a very vague dream my unpleasant relapse  
Of last evening. I’ve met with more wretched mishaps,  
But not often. The fault was my own, and the scare  
You all kindly took part in. I’ll use better care  
When again I go dreaming alone, Mrs. Lee.”

“But pray tell, Mr. Trent, how you happened to be  
Solitary and far, as you were, and so late.  
I have never supposed you a tempter of fate  
In such manner unsocial.”

“I’m here quite alone,”  
He made answer. “No soul whom I ever have known  
Have I seen for a week, till last night I met you  
And the major. I like to be captain and crew  
Now and then, and go drifting wherever the stream  
May incline me. The moonlight invites me to dream.  
And a dreamer is ever unsocial. But pray,  
Are you here for the season, or only a day?”

“For a month, Mr. Trent; and I hope you will stay  
While we tarry. My friends would not take a denial,

And brought me along *nolens volens*. My vial  
Of wrath at their folly is empty at last;  
For I think I could bear it a while to be cast  
On a desert indeed, with both you and the major  
To cheer me."

"You're talking of me, I will wager,  
In ways that you should not," that gentleman said,  
Coming up. "But no matter, I've been for the bread  
And the butter, and pickles, and now we are going  
Aboard."

The small steamer her whistle was blowing  
In little shrill screams that suggested his waking  
From reverie deep the night previous. Taking  
Their way to the yacht, they were off very soon  
For a morning's delight, and a long afternoon  
Mid the islands that skirt the Canadian shore.  
It was one of those days to stand out evermore  
In your memory, after you live them, divine  
From the Maker's own hand, with a shimmer and shine,  
And a marvellous glow that are rare as the mornings  
Of God. And all Nature had donned the adornings  
Of beauty, and wore them with grace like a queen.  
Every islet seemed glad in its garments of green;  
And the far-away hills of the mainland were beaming  
With brightness against the blue sky.

Slowly steaming  
Adown the wide channel for two or three miles,  
They then rounded their course for the Lake of the Isles.  
How it sleeps, with the islands embracing it round,  
In its beautiful, silvery silence profound!  
The sweet charm of content is upon it, unbroken  
By sound of unrest, or the presence or token  
Of man. There is nothing to trouble the dreams  
That are born of its beauty, save haply the screams





Of some hawk as he greedily chases his prey,  
Or the splash of a fish in the water.

“Some day

I would die in a beautiful silence like this,  
And go out of the world with the world’s wooing kiss  
To withhold me,” said Trent, in a low underbreath,  
To the friend at his side.

“Don’t remind me of death

In the midst of such beauty and peace,” she replied.  
“I would live on forever within it!”

She sighed ;

But her face wore a smile as she spoke.

“ I ’m a heathen

You ’ll think, Mr. Trent ; but no fancy to me than

The fancy of death is more dreadful. I can’t

Overcome it. It ’s foolish, I ’m ready to grant ;

But I shrink from all thought of just dying—just giving

Up breath, and so—stopping forever. My living

Don’t count for so much, I admit, as it might,

For myself and my friends ; and I value it light

As you possibly could do. It isn’t that I

Am so anxious to live ; but I don’t want—to die.”

They were sitting, it chanced, just a trifle apart,

And unheard by the rest.

“ It is not in the art

Of the preacher to make such a commonplace thing

Of this dying as some would fain make it. The sting

Of mortality is and must be that it perishes.

Nothing can last that the heart fondly cherishes

Here” — and he paused.

“ Yes, of course. And I know

That this body of mine, and this being, must go

Very soon the one way of all flesh ; yet the thought

Is a horror to me—that our bodies are brought

Into life for a little, to trouble and care for,

To keep, and at times, perchance, put up a prayer for ;

And loving them much, it may be, from such caring,

We then must accept for them only the faring

Of death and the grave. We were made, I believe,

For a destiny better.”

“ Some error of Eve

Played the mischief with destiny, I have been told,

If to answer your comment I may be so bold,”



Said the major, approaching, who heard the last sentence.  
"The whim of a woman, the lasting repentance  
Of man, — that's the way it has been ever since.  
While the whims amuse you, they may cause us to wince  
Pretty often. I'm 'posted,' — I carry the scars."  
And he laughed as he spoke.

"But not one of them mars  
Your abounding conceit, Major Mellen. Your pride  
In subduing the feminine heart will abide  
Any stabs you are likely to feel."

"Such sarcasm  
Demands from somebody a fit cataplasm.  
I go, Mrs. Lee, to receive it."

He bowed  
Very humbly, and turned on his heel.

"I've allowed  
Major Mellen to say such unmerited things  
Of my sex, that I really must silence his flings  
In the future, I fancy," she laughing remarked.

They were silent a little; then all disembarked  
For their dinner. A cool, grassy point that projected  
From one of the islands was wisely selected,  
In sight of the Lake of the Isles. There the trees  
Made a murmurous music as stirred by the breeze;  
The half-silence was sweet with the odor of flowers;  
And pretty green islets, like shyly hid bowers,  
Slept there in the sun, with their green garments trailing  
The water that kissed them, and seemed as if sailing  
Adown a green river to seas undiscovered  
By mortal. Some saint of the beautiful hovered  
About the rare spot, and enchanted it.

Verily  
Dinner out-doors should be eaten quite merrily



Ever; for half of the pleasure you take in it  
 Lies in the jovial mirth that you make in it.  
 Always some flies will get into the cream of it;  
 Fish that are frying will burn ere you dream of it;  
 Milk that at morning was sweet has been learning  
 The secret of Nature that hints of a churning;  
 The butter that's "come" may have hastened by running;  
 Mosquitoes, persistent with bills, keep a-dunning;  
 The table is always a doubtful thing under  
 Its showy pretences, and causes a wonder  
 If crockery rests in a state of security;  
 Coffee goes down with a fear for its purity;  
 Seats are uncertain, and spiders abundant,  
 The ladies complain: there is nothing redundant—  
 That's quite beyond question—except it be fun;  
 But you almost regret when the dinner is done;  
 For the atmosphere tones up your nerves like a tonic;  
 The winds and the waves make a murmur harmonic;

You sit in the shadows, and see the wide world,  
All its streamers of sunlight in splendor unfurled,  
Roll along in glad glory to-morrow to meet,  
And there's more in your dinner than merely to eat.

When this dinner was ended, they idled a while  
On the banks of the beautiful evergreen isle.  
Mr. Percival Trent, idling dreamily, laid  
Himself down, like the dreamer he was, in the shade  
Of a tree but a step from the others. To him  
Was the cup of delight even full to its brim.  
He had laughed and made merry this hour with the rest;  
He would taste now the apples of gold that were pressed  
To his hungering lips, — the sweet fancies that flitted  
So bright through his brain.

“He has saddled and bitted  
His Pegasus, certain,” the major declared,  
“And is off on a gallop. If any here dared  
Overhaul him at present, I fear they would find  
It a hard road to travel that's always inclined  
To the Pisgah of dreams.”

“I must say it were fitter  
To speak of yourself, seems to me, as the bitter —  
The bitter reviler of genius at times.  
Did you try to reach heaven by a ladder of rhymes  
Years ago, Major Mellen, and fail?”

“Mrs. Lee,  
You are always a mild inquisition to me.  
A few people were born with an interrogation  
Curled up on the end of their tongue. Moderation  
In questioning might be a virtue with these.  
They are slow with their statements, but busy as bees  
With conundrums.”

“Some men never make a reply

To the plainest of questions," she said, "but deary  
Every question that misses their lips. I was seeking  
A reason why you should forever be speaking  
So lightly of rhyme and its spirit. Success  
In pursuit of a thing seldom gives to one less  
Of respect for it."

"Well, you are free to impute  
To me failure in wooing the Muse. To refute  
Any false implication were idle indeed.  
If my Pegasus proved but a slow-going steed,  
And I early dismounted in common disgust,  
I've a host of good company plodding the dust  
Of our highway afoot. And I fancy the way  
Of the rhymers, wherever his fancy may stray,  
Is like that of the wicked: I think, my dear madam,  
The path of the poet has known its McAdam."

"McAdam made hard what each Eve has made easy  
Then, truly," she answered, with laugh that was breezy  
And light. "I incline to the common belief  
That the mother of poets is love, and the chief  
Inspiration of rhyme is the sensitive heart.—  
Is it so, Mr. Trent?"

"You have guessed it, in part,  
Mrs. Lee. If the rhyme be inspired in the least,  
Then the heart or the fancy, by aid of a priest  
Of the pen, must have wedded itself to the thought.  
And some glow of true feeling is certainly caught  
In the verse of the rhymers, when once it be found  
With the laurel of true immortality crowned.  
I believe there are volumes of rhyme written out,  
As to which we may harbor a lenient doubt  
If they ever were born of a true inspiration.  
The art of mechanics has blind consecration

In person of some who would wear the green bays  
Of the world's generosity."

"One of these days,"

Said the major with pride, "you may look for a poet  
In *me*. When my heart is full swept, you will know it  
By melody rare from its quivering strings.  
As the swan must be dying when sweetest he sings,  
You may know I have come to my absolute fate  
When I utter the notes that are sweetest."

"The mate

Of the swan is the goose, Major Mellen, that misses  
The music of better bred birds in its hisses  
So sibilant. He that irreverent mocks  
The rich note of a swan may produce a few squawks,  
And betray his true species."

She took a delight,  
As it seemed, in sarcastic allusion.

"I might

Pick a quarrel with you, my good cousin, for words  
So sarcastic and cruel. Our mention of birds  
Has evoked a whole flock of the turbulent daws  
Over yonder, that utter their parrot-like 'caws'  
Like a woman hard pressed for a sensible reason.  
To give you back torment in kind would be treason  
To gallantry, sore as I'm tempted. Alas,  
That a man is compelled to let ridicule pass  
From a woman unanswered! To wish I were one  
Of the privileged sex I could often have done,  
Had I never remembered what one of them said,—  
That, because as a woman she never must wed  
Any woman, she even could feel reconciled  
To her lot."

"The good Montagu painted it mild,  
My dear major, for her. She was talking for men



To be pleased, and to quote her thereafter. And then Lady Mary was vexed that the men should fare better In marriage than women could fare."

"I'm your debtor Again, Mrs. Lee. Don't increase the large debt By some stroke of your tongue more sarcastical yet. Let us take to the water, like ducks, with a quack;" And he nudged a good doctor near by. "To be back At a sensible hour, we must speedily start."



All at once went aboard, and prepared to depart.  
The main channel is narrow, that leads from the lake;  
But a dozen make off from it soon, and partake  
Of the tint of the little green islets. So deep  
Is the hue of the streams, that the islands, asleep  
On their bosom with verdure luxuriant, seem  
To be part of them ever. You sail in a dream,

Winding in, winding out, in a labyrinth sweet  
 With the wood-blossoms thick in their silent retreat;  
 And you fancy that here, in its beauty supernal,  
 This calm afternoon is unending, eternal.

At length, when emerged from the river's glad maze,  
 They were on a broad channel, lit up by the rays  
 Of the down-going sun. Across yonder, Canadian  
 Hills sloped away in a beauty Arcadian;  
 Down the wide stream unobstructed, the view  
 Reached afar to the low-bending canopy blue;  
 On the right, close at hand, were the Paradise Isles,  
 With their loveliness spanning the magical miles;  
 Over all, the soft glamour of sunset, as calm  
 And serene as the peace of a hallowing psalm.

"The St. Lawrence is waiting its laureate yet,  
 Mr. Trent. With your words to its melody set,  
 It might come to its own by and by."

There was ever

In Mrs. Lee's tone a mild flattery.

"Never

Can measure and melody happier wed,  
 I'm afraid, Mrs. Lee," hesitating, he said,  
 "Than in Moore's little lyric of days long ago,  
 When he echoed the musical 'Row, brothers, row,'  
 Of Canadian boatmen. Its mellowing flow  
 I recall very often at twilight. He penned it  
 Not far down the river, whose placid waves lend it  
 A charm I shall never forget."

"How could Moore,  
 Having seen the St. Lawrence, return to the poor,  
 Meagre life he had known? If you happen to learn  
 Why those poets who visit here ever return



To the feverish towns, will you tell me? It seems  
To me certain that this is the river of dreams."

"Do men die in their dreams, Mrs. Lee? If they did,  
Then the ruin and wreck of some lives would be hid  
In a merciful way from their heeding. We live  
As we must. 'Tis not all a receiving. We give  
Of ourselves to the world, in return for its gifts.  
Every hindrance or help that in some manner lifts  
Us up nearer the ideal life should be held  
For the good of our fellows. The hermit, impelled  
To a lonely and selfish career, only cheats  
His own being. His life is a canker, that eats  
Out his soul. We may dream now and then by the way,  
But to take on the armor, and fight as we may  
When our respite is over."

"All poets, I thought  
Till I knew you, were dreamers forever, and fought  
But in fancy. You seem to be double: you carry  
An active and passive that will not quite marry  
In one; for you work and you dream, and do each  
To the uttermost. What a magnificent reach  
There must be and there is to your life! Do you feel  
How much broader it is than the most?"

"Don't reveal  
My conceit, Mrs. Lee, with your questions," he parried.  
"I think that myself is quite happily married  
To all that is in me. My labor and rest  
Never trouble each other. My vigor and zest  
With my indolence ever are fully agreed:  
I'm as willing to stop as I am to proceed,  
When a good time for stopping has come. And the scope  
Of all life is the same,—from the fear to the hope,  
From the doubt of the mortal, far on, till it holds

By the Infinite, where the immortal unfolds  
Into trust. There is never a being more broad  
Than to reach from itself to the merciful God."

After that, they were thoughtful and silent a while.  
A rare flush on the sky held the grace of a smile,  
As if heaven, bending over the earth in its sleep,  
Saw a beauty to win it, ere pausing to weep  
In the dews of the night, over sadness and sorrow  
That darkened to-day, and must sadden to-morrow.  
The evening wore on with much laughter and jest  
From the others. The glow faded out of the west;  
And the stars, in their marvellous shimmer and sheen,  
Like a glimmer of glory, fell softly between  
The old day and the new. 'T was a time to be glad  
In some quiet of soul such as he must have had,  
Who, asleep on the plain, saw a ladder of light,  
And the angels of God bringing peace through the night.

By and by they swung round, and across the broad sweep  
Of the river below, as along the soft steep



Of the sky the late moon slowly climbed.

“It has been

A rare day, Mrs. Lee. If one never could win  
His lost paradise back, had he known days like this  
He could make for himself a few ages of bliss  
Out of memory.”

“Woman lost Eden to man;  
But he finds it again in her love.”

“If he can,”

Said the major, near by, who had half overheard.

“If he *will*, I suggest as the much truer word,”  
Mrs. Lee quick retorted.

“Oh, well, he is willing  
Forever, good cousin,” he answered, “and thrilling  
Quite often with sense of a paradise new,  
But as often thrust out of it. Eves have been true  
To their early example always.”

“Mr. Trent,  
Is there nothing can make Major Mellen repent  
Such heretical speeches?”

But Trent only smiled.  
“He has nothing, in fact, to repent of. Such wild  
And erratic assertions serve nought from his lips,  
But to put for a moment his thought in eclipse,  
As we all are aware. He’s a genius for saying  
What nobody doubts more than he does.”

“But praying

The pardon of poets for trespassing thus  
As a poacher upon their dominion, and plus  
The humility even *I* feel to be found  
By a poet himself on the privileged ground  
Without proper consent, I would emphasize keenly  
The right of all men to what poets serenely

Accept for themselves, — to exaggerate feeling,  
Dissemble the thought they profess to revealing,  
Make statements as fact that are half absurd fancies,  
And build upon fiction their idle romances."

The major talked smoothly at times, with that flavor  
Satirical still in his words.

"There are graver  
And guiltier crimes, Major Mellen, than one  
You accuse yourself of, and then hasten to run  
To excuses for ever committing it. Stay  
In the poets' preserves quite as long as you may,  
I can promise that they will forgive the affront,  
If you bring us some game at the end of your hunt,"  
Mrs. Lee made him answer:

"Don't make game of me  
In such cold-blooded fashion, I beg, Mrs. Lee.  
We are near to the landing, let all disembark  
Before you shall cruelly fire the whole park  
Of artillery light which is hid in your speech:  
There are others, you know, who might be within reach."  
So with laughter and jest the day came to its close  
For them all far along in the evening. Repose  
Was as sweet as the day had been rare, and the vision  
Of dreams that it brought had a beauty Elysian.



## X.



AFTER this, there were days upon days  
of delight

Unalloyed. Percy Trent wrote to Ger-  
aldine quite

An unselfish account of his generous  
pleasure.

“I find in mere being,” he said, “such  
a measure

Of happy content as I never have dreamed  
When away from your side. Never gladness so gleamed  
In the sunlight, as simply perennial seems  
To one lingering here on the River of Dreams,  
As the bright Mrs. Lee christens it. It is queer  
That herself and the major should chance to be here  
The same season with me. I am glad that they came,  
Though their purpose and mine are not nearly the same.  
They are here just to lose a few weeks out of life:  
I am dreaming, the better to bear in the strife  
A man’s part by and by. It is well to recruit  
For the battle to be. It is well that the lute  
Should hang silent a while, that to-morrow its song  
May be clearer and truer, more certain and strong.  
Major Mellen is much as he was long ago,  
Only bitterer grown in his speech; but we know,  
Who have known him the longest, how much that he feigns  
To be earnest is said for effect. That he pains

Me at times with his cynical sneers, I admit,  
Notwithstanding; and often I laugh at his wit,  
When I grieve with a hurt that is sudden and keen,  
For he spares not the holiest things. He has seen  
Some experience sad, I'm persuaded,—more sad  
That its lasting effect on his life has been bad.  
He was always a doubter of everything true,  
As a fact, or in word. 'Give the devil his due,'  
After all; and the major has many good traits.  
He is capital company often, and hates  
Every sham with a hatred that urges assault  
Of the fiercest. I fancy, at times, that his fault  
Of condemning the right has grown out of long seeing  
So much of the wrong and the false, and of being  
So keenly alive to pretence.

“Mrs. Lee

And myself are the best of good friends, if to be  
Always frank and outspoken together, to find  
Satisfaction in similar moods of the mind,  
To have sympathies somewhat in common, may make  
Us all that. She has known, I am certain, the ache  
Of a heart that is strong in its passion, unfolding  
Its riches with never a thought of withholding,—  
The pain that I fancy some women must keep  
Throughout life, in a poverty wretched and deep  
That was born of their prodigal love. Is there balm  
For such aching of soul? In the liberal palm  
Of the white hand of Peace, is there quiet and rest  
For such throbbings of pain in so troubled a breast?  
I am syllabing questions I only have thought  
Hitherto. Though quite often with her, I have sought  
In no manner to learn what her sorrow has been—  
What it has been, perchance what it is. I begin  
To be reverent even in presence of souls



That have hidden away in their silence the scrolls  
Of their own revelation. No idle perusal  
May learn of the secrets they hold in refusal  
From men.

“I suspect Mrs. Lee knew the arts  
Of a finished coquette, and made playthings of hearts,  
In some earlier time: there’s no hinting, however,  
Of conquest to-day in her social endeavor.  
She treats all her friends in a courteous way  
That is pleasant to see; but I think she could play



A sad havoc with feelings the tenderest still,  
If to times opportune she but added the will.  
Do I hold her the less in respect for believing  
She may have been guilty of ruthless receiving,

Aware that she could not give back in return?  
It is true that I might, if I yet had to learn  
That a woman wrongs man just to gratify her  
Present mood, not to scarify him. I demur  
But the least to her pleasing herself, if the hurt  
She inflict be not truly malicious. A flirt  
Who should send a man off into grimmiest despair,  
Just to see him writhe on in his agony there,  
I would simply despise; but a woman delighting  
Herself with the winning of love, and inviting  
Its largess for pleasure it gives her alone —  
Why, her motive might partly, in my view, atone  
For the harm growing out of her deed. For of right  
A man owes to your sex all the wealth of delight  
He is able to pay.

“Do you smile at my reasoning?

Well, you will pardon a moderate seasoning  
Of the absurd in my argument. Those  
Who are victims of feminine art, I suppose,  
Judge more harshly than I do concerning it. You,  
Who so easily might have made many to rue  
Your attractiveness, ought with compassion to look  
On another who possibly some time forsook  
The true heights of her womanhood, found the low plane  
Of coquetry, and made of her beauty a vain  
*Ignis fatuus*, leading some men to their grief.  
I have half been inclined to the foolish belief  
That the major has suffered from Mrs. Lee's lack  
Of requital in fullest degree; that far back  
In his younger young manhood he loved her, as men  
Like himself are not apt to love ever again.  
And why not? They were friends long ago, it appears,  
In a friendship that not very seldom endears  
To the uttermost one or the other who feels it.

If sensitive yet from the hurt, he conceals it  
Remarkably well, it is true; yet a stoical  
Nature like his may be truly heroical,  
Smiling despite of its pain.

“But you care  
Very little for him or his past, I'm aware :  
I'll not speak of them further. And as to my present,  
I own that I find it so wondrously pleasant,  
I would not consign it to yesterday soon.  
The fair land of the Future may yield as its boon  
Such another rare season of beauty and bliss;  
But I doubt if I find it hereafter in this.”

So he gave himself up to his rhapsodies mild  
When he wrote of the river. Its beauties beguiled  
Him to frequent extravagant speech. That his eyes  
Saw no every-day beauty with aught of surprise  
She knew well. Was there loveliness for him so rare  
As alone to enchant him thus utterly? Fair  
As the River of Dreams might appear in his sight,  
Could it thrill him to keenest ecstatic delight  
With its beauty alone? Did no presence apart  
From inanimate things take a hold on his heart  
As with masterful sweetness?

If questions like these  
Were in Geraldine's thought, by the slowest degrees  
Did they syllables take, and then ask to be heard  
Of her love. And no query of wonder, no word  
Of inquiry, escaped her to him. It was well  
That he linger thus long at the Islands to tell  
Her of beauty and blessing they yielded him. So  
She made answer in brief, and was glad in the glow  
Of his gladness, without a foreboding or dread.  
She could trust, and would trust to the end, she had said;

And the end must be well, let it bring what it would,  
Since a Father so loving and tender and good  
Had its shaping and care.

There are natures that keep  
Such a faith in such wise; but, if moved to the deep  
Of their possible doubting, the tempest that rages  
Within them grows wilder till nothing assuages  
But words of the Master, with tenderest thrill  
Speaking out through the darkness their "Peace!" and  
"Be still!"



## XI.

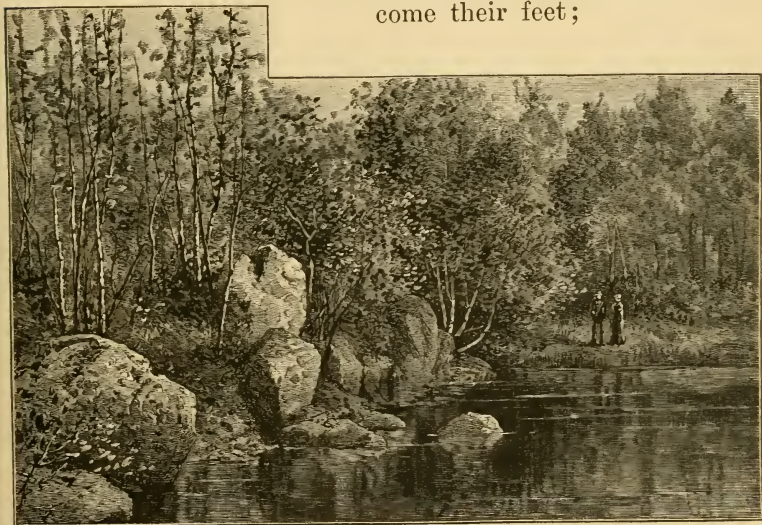
T

HEY had dined at Deer Island, a dozen  
or more

Of the seekers for pleasure. A half-  
shaded shore

Gave them welcome; its turf, that  
was mossy and sweet,

Running down to the water to wel-  
come their feet;



And its trees, that were sentinels faithful and strong  
Of the years, breathing out a monotonous song  
Of old summers departed, half song and half sigh,



And inviting them listless and dreamy to lie  
In the quivering shadows when dinner was done:  
So they lingered in happy abandon. The sun,  
When they took to their boats, had sunk low in the west,  
And the night would be moonless; the river's fair breast  
Was resplendent with ripples of silver and gold  
As the breezes sprang up, and, with dalliance bold  
And with passionate kisses, beguiled its repose  
Into sighing unrest. They were near to the close  
Of a glad day together,—these two we have traced  
In their talk and their feeling a while.

“It's a waste  
Of fine weather to think of returning so soon,”  
Mrs. Lee made remark. “And this whole afternoon  
Has gone by like a dream. *Do* I live, Mr. Trent?  
Do I verily sip the sweet cup of content  
As it seems that I do? Is regret but a thing  
Of the past?”

“Into seasons like this not a sting  
Of old memories ever should enter,” he said.  
“Let the dead of your yesterdays bury its dead;  
Drink the cup of content with no lingering glances  
Behind. There is joy in the present. Romances  
Forever abide in the future. Look out  
On the shall-be as I do, with never a doubt  
Of its bringing the best of your being.”

He lifted  
The oars as he spoke, and they silently drifted  
Adown the still stream.

“Do you never feel fear  
Of the future?” she asked. “Do you never seem near  
To some terrible tragedy? Are you so certain  
Of good you could lift the invisible curtain  
Of years with no tremor of heart?”



With surprise  
He looked deep in the depths of her beautiful eyes  
Ere he answered,—

“My friend, you are keen at divining  
Some thoughts unexpressed; for I have been inclining  
To fear of my morrows of late. And I stand,  
As I fancy at times, on debatable land,  
Between gladness and grief. In these days of delight  
I am far up the mountains of being, in sight  
Of that Beulah where grief is unknown; but I know  
There are valleys of Baca through which men must go  
Ere they climb to the summits of blessing. I wait  
With a painful expectancy, early or late,  
The upwellings of fountains of bitterness. When  
They appear, I must drink, as do all other men.”

“And some women,” she added: “indeed, you might say  
And all women. The waters that flow by our way  
Are as Marah sometimes.”

“There are few, I believe,  
Who drink only the sweetness of life. But to grieve  
Over sorrow gone by is not worse than to shrink  
From some possible sorrow before. We must drink  
The full cup of to-morrow, whatever the draught;  
But, or bitter or sweet, it is not to be quaffed  
Till to-morrow presents it. Sufficient indeed  
To the day is the evil thereof; and the need  
Of us all is a present of glad satisfaction,  
Where nought of the past makes unhappy exaction,  
And nought of the future repels or dismays.”

“And you live in the present?” returning his gaze,  
“Altogether, I mean, with no pain of the past  
Throbbing up, and no glamour of happiness cast

On the days that are coming?"

He smiled a reply

Before speaking.

"My patient confessor, if I  
Should admit that I look for some gladness supreme  
In the future, that, doing to-day, I but dream  
Of endeavor the proudest to-morrow, 't would seem  
Contradictory. I have admitted the truth,  
That I fear in the future some possible ruth  
Full of peril to peace; that I shrink from my morrows  
In doubt. But the future is broad; and it borrows  
A radiance often from glories that crown  
Us with gladness to-day. And I never look down  
The long vista of years, without seeing beyond  
All their possible gloom an illuming as fond  
As the kisses of dawn on the world. I am glad  
Of some day that's to be. If one morrow prove sad,  
I shall come to another, please God!"

"A glad faith,"

She responded. "But what of the past? Does no wraith  
Of some buried desire ever enter your room,  
As you sit in the silence of solitude's gloom,  
And torment you with words of regret? You have said,  
'Let the dead of your yesterdays bury its dead.'  
Do your dead never walk? Is there never a ghost  
Of dead love or dead hope to intrude when you most  
Would forget that you ever had hollowed a grave?  
Does your past sink away, as this shell in the wave,  
Out of sight, out of mind?" and she tossed a bright shell  
She had held, in the water.

"No funeral knell

Has been rung in my past," he responded with feeling,  
His sympathy touched by her sudden revealing  
Of hidden emotion. "I've stood by no bier

Of my love or my hope. I can sit with you here,  
And can say that my past has been pleasant and good;  
That my present you make, as but one other could,  
Satisfying, complete." And he noted the glow  
Of a tenderer light in her eyes, and the flow  
Of a deeper tint into her face. "I regret  
Only duty ill done. I can never forget  
What is gone, let it be whatsoever it may;  
Not the less would I live as I should in to-day,  
But remembering yesterday only for smiles  
That it gave" —

"Seeing somewhere the paradise isles  
Of your dream by the sea?" interrupting him.

"Yes,

Looking out on the billows before, I confess  
In the faith that beyond their unrest there is calm  
For us all in the infinite islands of balm."

"Will you teach me your faith? I am hungry for hope  
In the years. With the greatest of griefs I could cope,  
Could I only believe that beyond it is bliss.  
You have much to make glad: there is much that I miss,  
And but little I hold, and of this you have given  
The most. On the wings of your friendship I've striven  
To mount where the lark of your happiness sings:  
I am weighted too heavy, I fear, for the wings,  
Since I cannot fly far, and each flight only brings  
Its discouragement."

"Would I could lift you with me  
To the heights of a happy content, Mrs. Lee!  
To do this, my dear friend, I would cheerfully give  
Half a year of the life that is left me to live."

She but smiled at his words.

“I doubt not, my dear friend,  
You would give, quite as freely as others would lend,  
All you have—but the one thing you cannot.”

“And that?”

She was silent a little, and motionless sat,  
Looking into the depths of the shimmering deep.



“Is a love that is tender and strong, that can sweep  
Me up out of the gloom with its passionate grasp,  
And then hold me content in the quickening clasp  
Of its sunlight,—the love of a masterful heart  
Full of power, most learned in the delicate art  
Of its loving, most tender and loving indeed  
When its pity could see there was bitterest need—  
Such a love as a man gives one woman in life.”

“And God pity him, then, if she be not his wife,  
Or may not be!” he said with quick fervor.

“And she  
Who so needs such a love, in whose heart there can be  
Such a hunger without it?”

“God pity her too,  
In his infinite love, as all loving souls do!”

There were tears in her eyes as she questioned: each word  
Had a thrill that was strange as he answered. She heard,  
And was silent again for a moment, averting  
Her face from his gaze. Sudden passion asserting  
Itself in his breast, like a prisoner beating  
Against the hard bars of his prison, entreating  
For liberty, moved him beyond his control.  
He was swayed by a tempest undreamed of. His soul,  
Looking out of its windows of feeling, saw only  
Another soul, helpless and hopeless and lonely,  
And groping so after some path to the light  
And the cheer he could give as he must. In his sight  
She was near to the heights he had named. He could lift  
Her to peace and content by the plenteous gift  
Of his love, that was giving itself as if now  
It had first love's rare charity learned,—to endow  
Needy being with riches untold.

Ere he broke  
Into utterance wild and vehement, she spoke.  
“I'm but one of a thousand who hunger and thirst  
For their manna in Egypt; who wander accursed  
In a wilderness dreary, forever unblest  
By the gift of that land which they should have possessed  
But for doubting and fears. I shall die in my Edom,  
And know not the gladness of faith that is freedom,  
And service of heart that is scripture the sweetest.

My lot with the heathen Egyptian were meetest,  
Unled by the Moses of love toward a land  
I may never behold."

"When I gave you my hand  
As your friend, Mrs. Lee, I had little to offer  
Of worth, as I said; and, if now I should proffer  
Such love as you speak of, it might seem as meagre  
To you." He spoke low, with an emphasis eager  
And quick. "*Could* I lead to the plenty that lies  
Beyond Edom? My soul in its solitude cries  
For companionship such as it never has missed  
Till this hour. In the silence I tremble and list  
For your answer."

She looked in his eloquent face  
With a hungering look that will ever have place  
In his memory, tears overflowing her cheeks.

"You must hear how my heart in its gratitude speaks  
A reply that my lips cannot utter. Its throbs  
Are so strong, they would shape all my words into sobs,  
Did I try. As the call of a bird to its mate  
That has lingered too long, and is home-flying late,  
Even winning and tender as this is the cry  
Of your soul unto mine; and as glad would it fly,—  
This poor shivering soul that is silent so long,—  
Full as glad would it mount to the summits of song  
With your own by its side, as when, night-shadows gone,  
The glad warblers will wing themselves up to the dawn  
In a sunburst of music. My comrade and friend,  
Could you walk with me now, from this day to the end,  
You could be—ah, how keenly I feel it and know it!—  
Both heaven and the way. But you cannot. The poet  
Within you may pity my need; and the man,  
In his passion of feeling that generous ran



To my help, may give all that he hath, even this  
That is treasure the greatest of all: but the bliss  
Of possession can never be mine. Do not ask  
Any reason. For you I have lifted the mask  
Of my heart, and you see it all quivering here,  
As none other has seen or will see it."

"So near

Have I come, as you say, my dear friend, to your side,  
To be put thus away? Let whatever betide,  
You must linger a while in my love. You have waited  
Too lonely and long for the comrade belated  
By fate; to repel him, or bid him farewell  
With a half-recognition. My passion must tell  
Its sweet story yet over and over again  
In your ears. I must give you with lips and with pen,  
As a prodigal gives, of the wealth of my heart,  
Till you go from your poverty gladly apart,  
And I wander a pauper forever, unless  
You are prodigal too in return. I would bless  
And be blest. May I not?"

So he pleaded, the strength  
Of his passion possessing him quite, till at length  
It had mastered him utterly. Could she withstand  
Such entreaty?

"My friend, when you gave me your hand  
As my friend, you gave much to a beggar for much,  
And your friendship had in it a hallowing touch  
That uplifted. My life had been swept passion-clean,  
As I thought. In my desert no budding of green  
Could give beauty again, I believed. You have shown  
My mistake; but not less must I wander alone  
Through the wilderness ever. Some manna is mine  
By the way; and this day's is the nearest divine,  
And the sweetest, that ever my hungering soul

Has made feast of. If only such generous dole  
Could be mine through the years!" with a passionate thrill  
Overflowing her speech.

"As it can, if you will,"

He persisted.

She shook her head sadly.

"No more,

If you love me. But see! we are far from the shore,  
And a storm is approaching." And as she thus spoke,  
On the twilight's dim silence a thunder-peal broke,  
And aroused him.

Quick over the north there had spread  
A black gathering mass, that grew dense overhead  
While he looked. A dull moan was borne out on the air  
From the pines in the distance. The day, that was fair  
As a vision of peace, had departed in wrath  
That would quickly envelop them. Straight in the path  
Of the storm they were floating, as stoutly he bent  
To his oars without answer, and rapidly sent  
The light craft o'er the water.

"Some shelter we'll find  
Over yonder, I think, if we do not much mind  
What it is," by and by he remarked. "It is plain  
That the deluge will come very soon. We must gain  
Any harbor that offers."

He rowed with his might,  
While the storm, sweeping on with the speed of the night  
That it deepened too early, was nearing them fast,  
And they heard the wild shriek of its trumpeting blast.

## XII.



MAGNIFICENT picture he saw as he  
rowed :

On his left, in the west, there yet  
lingered and glowed

The last rays of the sun, in a light  
that was yellow

As gold, and suffusing the sky with  
their mellow

Effulgence ; the clouds coming nearest were red  
As the crimson that flows from the battle-field's dead,  
And above them were opal and purple and gray ;  
To the north, moving forward in martial array,  
Were dense masses of darkness, and through them the flame  
Of the lightning burned swift ere the thunder-peals came  
With their torrent of sound. Far away, where the sky  
In the lap of the hills appeared closest to lie,  
The black mass became silvern ; for rain had begun  
In the valley beyond, where the lingering sun  
Threw its light on a lower horizon.

On swept  
The dark masses above, while the silvern sheet kept  
Its way slower and gentler below, like a veil  
Slipping down o'er the world in compassion. The gale  
Would be on them before they could land, so it seemed.  
More intense grew the darkness o'erhead ; brighter gleamed  
The mad lightning, more frequent its flame ; all the west

In a moment was shrouded in shadow. The crest  
Of each wave, as the water grew wilder apace,  
Led the swift-flying boat on a wearying race  
For the shore. Yet the strokes of the rower were strong,  
Though he wearied. The storm was at hand ; but the long



Way was over at last, as he lifted the skiff  
Half its length on the sand, at the base of a cliff  
Not too steep for their climbing.

“I’ll draw up the boat,  
So the waves cannot easily wash it afloat,”  
Nearly breathless he said, as he helped her alight.  
“There’s a cottage here somewhere, I’m certain, which might  
Give us shelter the best, could we find it. The island

Is small, I imagine. We'll climb to the highland  
And see."

So they bent their steps upward, her hand  
In his own. On the highest uplift of the land,  
In the midst of a grove rather scanty, appeared  
A low cabin untenanted. Even this cheered  
Their endeavor, and led them a welcome to seek  
From its shelter uncertain. The door offered weak  
And quick-conquered resistance. They entered as down  
Fell the rain in a flood.

"We're not likely to drown,  
Anyhow, Mrs. Lee, though the prospect is dark  
As when old Father Noah set sail in his ark.  
How the floods of our deluge unsparingly pour!  
Hear the winds and the rain as they bellow and roar  
Through the trees! See the lightning that blazes above us,  
As if the dear Lord had forgotten to love us,  
And came to us now in his wrath! It is worth  
A day's wetting to witness him visit the earth  
In the might of his power."

She shuddered, and drew  
Herself nearer in dread. A fierce thunderbolt flew  
Past their sight, and a crash, as if worlds in collision  
Had met, fairly stunned them. An instant their vision  
Saw nothing; their senses had gone with the glare  
Of the lightning that vanished in gloom.

"Let me care  
For you tenderly once, as I can," he appealed,  
As he felt her form tremble. "There must be concealed  
In the cabin some helps to your comfort."

He made  
His way round in the darkness, now deep, till he laid  
Eager hold on a rickety chair, which he brought  
For her use; and, on searching still further, he caught

By the gleam of the lightning a glimpse of a cot  
And a camp-stool.

“I own that these quarters are not  
What they might be for cheerfulness,” gayly he said ;  
“But there could be worse fortune than this that has led  
Us to shelter so dismal. Imagine us yet  
In the tempest out yonder ! We never should get  
To the land with our lives.”

“’T would have seemed little matter  
To me only yesterday. Life did not flatter  
Me much with its promise, although I confessed  
To a horror of death. There was nought I possessed  
Of a value worth counting. God’s beggars have riches  
Far greater than mine. I had torn from their niches  
My idols of cost ; and my heart’s wide Valhalla  
Was empty.”

“And now ?”

“You have seen the white calla  
Unfold all its treasure of purity soon  
As the morning blooms full in the  
sweetness of noon ?  
Even so has my love for you  
burst into bloom

From its bud in the dark. It would seem as if gloom  
Must forever be brightened, indeed, with its light ;  
And to-day I have riches untold in the sight  
Of this love that is mine.”

She was speaking in low,  
Suppressed accents, that took indescribable glow  
From the feeling that moved her. He knelt by her side,  
As a reed in the breath of her speech.

“You denied  
Me the right any longer,” he answered, “to plead  
For the sweet privilege of supplying your need





To the uttermost. All that I am is your own  
To do with as you may. Will you give me a stone  
Of denial again, when I ask for the bread  
Of possession complete?"

She but rested her head  
On his shoulder in silence, her heart throbbing fast  
As did his. In possession too perfect to last  
He was hers, she was his, for the moment. He held  
Her supremely his own; and his passion compelled  
Her glad kisses in answer to his.

"But a taste  
Of the honey of Canaan is mine in the waste  
Of my wilderness barren," she whispered at length.  
"It has marvellous sweetness."

"And marvellous strength  
Has this love that I give you," he said in return.  
"I believed I had nothing of passion to learn —"

"As did I; and the ratio of this that I feel  
Fairly frightens me. Many a wife would conceal  
Such a fervor of love from her husband; and I  
Can be never your wife, Heaven pity me!"

"Why?  
What shall keep us apart? You were made for my holding,"  
He passionate said, almost fiercely infolding  
Her close in his arms. "You are mine by the claim  
Of my love, and your ample return. You became  
Wholly mine when confession you made of that love;  
And I hold you by right and by title above  
All beside."

"It is madness to let you forget  
Your own ties in this manner. Before we had met,  
You no longer belonged to yourself. Could I keep  
What another might prove to be hers, and so creep

By and by between me and my claim?"

Not a word

Of reply for a little escaped him. She heard  
In the stillness between the loud thunder his heart  
Beating heavy and quick, saw the color depart  
From his face as the lightning shone on it, and felt  
That he suffered. He rose to his feet where he knelt,  
Put her tenderly from him, and strode to the door  
As if panting for air. It was minutes before



He made answer in fact; then his voice sounded broken  
And tremulous.

“Yes: I am glad you have spoken  
Of what I should first have remembered. I thank

You for doing it, since I so wickedly drank  
Of the cup of forgetfulness. Ever its flow  
Must entice me, I fear.

“A few moments ago,”

Coming to her again, “my dear friend, I was mad  
As the veriest lunatic. Passion has had  
Its free run for a season. It may not outlive me :  
It may, to my sorrow. No matter. Forgive me  
For offering what was not mine to deliver.  
Forget, if you can, what was said — on the river  
And here. Let us be the same friends we have been  
In these days of delight, if we can. Let me win  
My good comrade once more.”

And she gave him her hand  
With a clasp that was warm.

“You are noble and grand  
As no other man living could be,” she declared.  
“In your madness, if madness it were, I have shared :  
Let me share in your penitence, too, Mr. Trent ;  
Though I doubt if indeed I do truly repent.  
It was such a sweet madness ! it thrilled heart and brain  
With such gladness of being ! it stilled all the vain  
And unsatisfied longings that trouble my breast,  
With such tremulant stilling to such a glad rest !  
I shall love you — I must — though I never may tell you  
Again of my love ; and could loving compel you  
To leave all the world, and to cleave unto me,  
I should never indulge the compulsion, but flee  
From your presence at once. For again let me say,  
I must journey through Edom alone. If the way  
Be so rough that I stumble and fall, you may pray  
In the strength of your faith for my faltering feet,  
That they carry me soon to some rest that is sweet ;  
And if prayer can avail one whose faith, in eclipse

By her doubt, is lost sight of, I'm certain your lips  
Could efficiency lend it for me. But alas  
For the wilderness lonesome through which I must pass  
From this day to the end!"

In the darkness he knew  
There were tears on her face, and he tenderly drew  
Her again to his arms.

"I can be to you much,  
Though I may not be all," he responded. "And such  
As I freely can give you must freely accept.  
Let what loving has sown, in the future be reaped  
In our friendship. To walk by your side as your friend  
Now and then, you must grant me from this till the end."

"Between you and my life," she made answer, "there lies  
A great gulf that is deep as the ocean: our cries  
For companionship cross it. You hold me, as here,  
In the arms of your love, with your heart beating near,  
But we stand far apart on the opposite steeps,  
And between us there bide the impassable deeps.  
Do not ask me my riddle to read. Let me hide  
It away from you now and forever."

She sighed,  
And he answered her but with caresses, then rose,  
And in silence peered out in the dark.

"I suppose  
We must manage to stay here till morning. The rage  
Of the storm is subsiding; but I can't engage  
To return you in safety before. We are far  
From the Bay, and there's not the first gleam of a star  
Through the gloom. 'T would be folly to think of my  
finding  
Our way up these channels so many and winding  
In darkness like this. I can make you a bed

On the cot yonder somehow, it may be," he said  
By and by.

Then he busied himself at his task,  
With some show of success.

"'T is n't all I could ask  
For your comfort," he briefly explained, as he made  
His way cautiously back to her side. "With the aid



Of a blanket or two, and a pillow, I think  
You could rest very well. As it is, do not shrink  
From accepting the best present poverty yields;  
And be certain my tenderness watches, and shields  
You from harm."

"I *am* weary," she answered, "and glad



Of whatever you offer. No fair lady had  
Truer knight for her service in chivalry's time  
Than will guard me, I know. You should weave into rhyme  
So romantic an episode truly as this is."  
He pointed her words with some lingering kisses  
By way of good-night, and then led her across  
To the couch.

"No: the world must submit to the loss  
Of our living romance altogether. I hold  
It a thing far too sacred for pen to unfold,  
Even under the veiling of fiction. And then  
You remember my thought,—that the poets don't pen  
Their experience often."

"Oh, yes! I remember.  
You make of each poet a perfect dissembler,  
Pretending to what is unfelt, and denying  
The feeling he has any voice, only sighing  
In secret perhaps. If I state it too strong,  
Pray forgive me."

He laughed.

"But I own that the song  
May be real to him while he sings, though in fact  
It is fiction the veriest. Singers have lacked  
Less in feeling, indeed, than in fancy. Poetical  
Genius the finest, I fear, is heretical  
Most with regard to the truth, rather shaping  
What might be than telling what is; sooner draping  
A dream in the garments of beauty, and making  
Men think it of bone and of muscle, than taking  
A skeleton out of the past, and with aching  
Remembrance so robing it round as to show  
What perfection of form fell to dust long ago."

"But I don't half believe in your theory, though



You do talk so convincingly sometimes about it.  
 One day, I am certain, you'll even half doubt it  
 Yourself. For you poets are men of rare feeling:  
 You *must* be, indeed; and to think of concealing  
 It always is mockery. Even the claim  
 That your feeling flows out in some fiction the same  
 As in positive sorrow I cannot believe.  
 Men may weep at some fancy of grief; but they grieve  
 To the uttermost only when sorrow cuts deep  
 To the quick of their souls. And we know, when we weep  
 At their words, what the hurt is. The mass of us feel  
 The same hurt, it may be, but can never reveal  
 Its keen torment because we are dumb. Why is speech  
 So denied to the many? Why is it that each  
 Of us has not the gift of expression? And why  
 Must some hearts go through life with a hungering cry  
 For the good that they miss, and unable to tell  
 What their need is, their hunger, their thirst? Is it well  
 For the world that so many are mutes?"

"I'm unable  
 To answer, my friend," he replied. "What a Babel  
 Indeed it would be, though, if all were endowed  
 With a gift as of tongues, and at once the whole crowd  
 Should begin to communicate! Angels defend us  
 From fate so disturbing! May kind fortune send us  
 A quieter morrow to die in!"

"Complaint, —  
 Speaking soberly now, as in fear of some saint  
 Of the silent departed, — complaint might be all  
 That from lips of the many incessant would fall,  
 Were they dowered with speech. They might never give  
 voice  
 To their hope or their faith; they might never rejoice  
 In some pæan of gladness to lift the heart up;

They might never in song press a cheer-giving cup  
To the lips of those fainting and worn in the strife.  
And the best of all song is the song that is life  
To the dying, it may be, and strength to the weak,  
And sure faith to the helpless, who only can seek  
For some help far beyond them."

"Yet song that is mellow

With tenderest feeling, that shows us a fellow-  
Heart throbbing with ours in our need or our pain,  
Has its mission, though born of complaint that was vain  
And unworthy. Our sufferings syllables take  
Of the words of the poets, and solace their ache  
With a half-revelation in language our own  
As we make it so only. No soul sings alone  
In its loneliness truly; no other soul sighs  
In its bitter regret, without hushing the cries  
Of some near one unseen, but who pauses to hear,  
And in silence is comforted."

"Doubtful, my dear

Mrs. Lee. It's a pretty conceit; but I fear  
It is rather too fanciful. Song may uplift;  
But complaint is depressing. The true singing gift  
Should be his who will sing in the world but to gladden it:  
Dirges, indeed, may be sweet; but they sadden it.  
All I could ask for my Muse would be this:  
That it cheerily sing till some being shall miss,  
When it ceases, a hope and a help, and shall long :  
For the singer's return, his renewal of song."

"But the sweetest of singing has ever a sigh in it;  
Loving seems always to linger and die in it;  
All that we catch in the syllables clearest  
Is just a remembrance of what was the dearest  
And nearest to some heart in days long departed."

"You've listened, no doubt, till the foolish tears started,  
When he who so tenderly sang was but grieving  
In fancy alone."

"Is there, then, no believing  
The word of a poet?"

"Well, now, I suppose  
If the word be spelled out in good truth-telling prose,  
You may take it," he answered with laugh that was light.  
"But I beg of you stop your conundrums. Good-night!  
Get such rest as you can."

"Will you give me a word  
For my dreams that is sweetest the air ever stirred?  
Say you love me, and say it in prose, that I never  
May doubt it."

"I love you, shall love you forever,"  
He said with low emphasis.

"Thanks! I could rest  
Anywhere, anyhow, by such benison blest."

Then in silence he sat till the morning, his mind  
All a tumult of troubled emotion. Be blind  
To his wretched position no longer could he.  
There was Geraldine Hope: here was Isabel Lee.  
He was far from them both as the night from the day.  
He was far from his faith as forever are they  
Who forever are faithless. And so self-accusing,  
Unspared of his conscience, and grimly refusing  
To smother the stings that it gave, looking out  
On his future with only a harrowing doubt  
Of what might be in store, he awaited the breaking  
Of day.

Mrs. Lee was asleep; and forsaking  
The cabin when on the horizon a priest  
Of the dawn began incense to burn in the east,

He walked down to the water his boat to prepare  
For departure. No traces remained anywhere  
Of their landing. Till sunrise had silvered the dawn  
He made search without finding: the frail craft was gone.



### XIII.



WHEN the rest of the party returned to  
the Bay,  
Hurried on by the tempest that threat-  
ened them, they  
Were surprised and alarmed to dis-  
cover that two  
Of their number were missing. But  
nought could they do

To determine what fate had befallen the twain.  
To go out and make search in the storm would be vain  
As unsafe.

“They have landed, and there must remain  
In such shelter as chances, wherever it be,  
Until morning,” the major remarked. “Mrs. Lee  
Will regard it romantic. It may be that Trent  
Will consider the storm as an episode sent  
For his special advantage. He likes the dramatic  
In life, and was always a trifle erratic  
In love. He may die a true Romeo yet  
In some desperate strait for the last Juliet  
Of his fancy.”

And so Major Mellen, satirical,  
Spoke of his friend.

“If love shows us a miracle  
Ever,” he went on to say, “it is when  
It renews itself over and over again

In the breast of a poet. So often it rises  
Afresh from the dead, it no longer surprises  
With new revelations of being. Besides,  
It so largely increases itself, and divides  
Of its multiplied measure so freely, it shows  
Arithmetical qualities few would suppose  
Could belong to a thing sentimental."

The sneer

Of the cynic half hid, half revealed itself, here  
In his words.

"Percy Trent is in love with my cousin  
As madly as ever he's been with a dozen  
Before; but he has n't discovered the fact  
Altogether, I think. When he does, he will act  
Very much as if he had committed the sin  
That has never forgiveness. He never would win  
For the sake of the winning: he never would share  
Of his love where he ought not, if caution or care  
Could prevent it. His creed is the best; but the fact is,  
His principle does n't quite wed with his practice.  
Don't blame him! I can't. Every man for his creed  
Is responsible. Let that be right, let it read  
Parallel with the preaching that seems to be best;  
And society answers for him for the rest.  
What he is, what he does, is small matter, so long  
As the thing he believes is not glaringly wrong.  
Then the heart is indeed a free agent: the head  
Cannot hold it in humble subjection. If led  
Into ways that are wicked, no part of the blame  
Should be thrust upon him who gives only his name  
To the agent, and does not control it. Whose love  
Is within his discretion? Whose will is above  
His affection, directing and guiding it? Better  
That hearts should love often than always be debtor



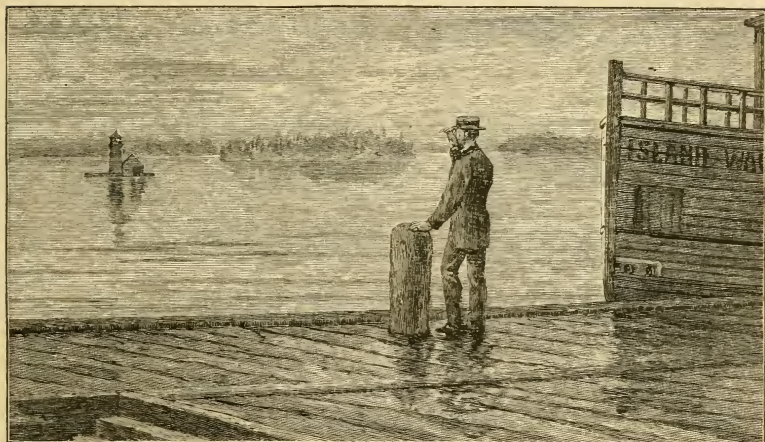
To prudence for perfect restraint."

So he ran

To his flippant, irreverent speech, that began  
To be reckless at times.

The next morning shone clear

As the mornings that dawn in the blush of the year.  
Major Mellen, denying his habit, forsook  
The seduction of sleep. Rising early, he took  
His way down to the wharf, thinking haply to meet  
The belated pair on their return, and to greet  
Them with playful reproach. But his keen vision scanned  
All the channels in vain, to the dim-lying land



On the Canada side, far away down the stream.  
The wide waters were tinted with morn's rosy gleam,  
And unflecked by a sail. The white flash of an oar  
In the sun was nowhere to be seen.

Long before

His late breakfast, the major was anxious, but laughed

At the fears of the rest.

“He can manage his craft  
Like a riverman born,” so the major contended.  
“If out in it when the quick tempest descended,  
He’d safely enough make the shore. He’s expert  
With the rod and the line. They have come to no hurt,  
But are breaking their fast in poetical leisure,  
Perfecting a bass in a broil. There’s a pleasure  
For poets in cooking the fruit of their lines,  
As in eating it, under the odorous pines  
Of a solitude wild. Trent would hardly desire  
To be known as a monk ; but a very good frier  
He is, I am certain — of fish. They will fare  
Well enough till we see them again as a pair  
Of meek truants returning to school.”

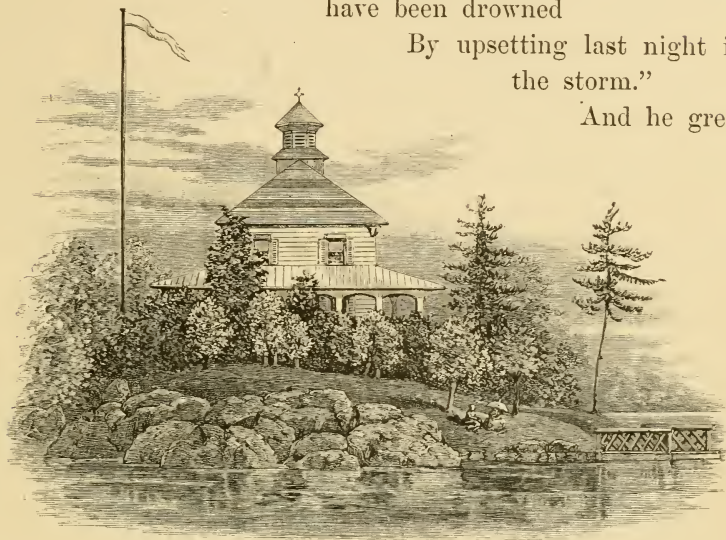
Yet he made  
Sudden haste to secure the small yacht, nor delayed  
To set out on a mission of quest, when at noon  
The twain missing were still unreported. As soon  
As the search had been fairly begun, he confessed  
To himself an untimely delay, and, impressed  
With a fear undefined, he kept watch as they sailed,  
Half in hope, when they came near the shore, to be hailed  
By the ones whom they sought. Every island they rounded,  
Each headland they scanned, until hope was confounded  
With keen apprehension in all. Not a trace  
Of the boat or its burden appeared. The broad space  
Of the river below the last islands was crossed  
And recrossed yet again, to make sure that the lost  
Were not hinted of there in some manner ; and then  
They went farther above. As they rounded again  
A small island that could not a shelter have given,  
The major caught sight of a skiff that had driven  
Itself on the rocks.

“It is Trent’s!” he declared,  
 With excitement that each of the company shared  
 As they neared it. “And stove to a wreck! We have  
     found

All we shall for the present. They must  
     have been drowned

By upsetting last night in  
     the storm.”

And he grew



Quickly pale as he spoke. When they landed, he flew  
 In hot haste to the boat; but it offered no clew  
 To their seeking, beyond its bare presence. It lay  
 Without oars, bottom up, badly broken.

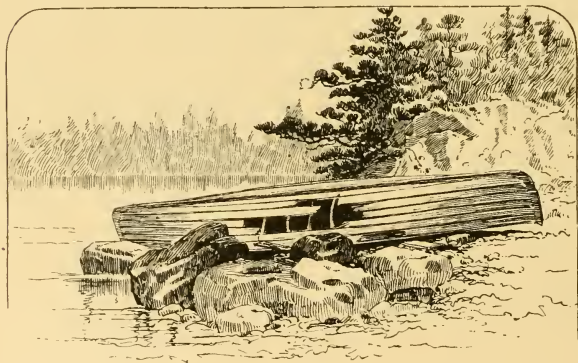
The day  
 Was far spent when they gave up the search, and returned,  
 Bearing with them the cast-away skiff, having learned  
 Nothing more. No one doubted the common conclusion  
 Expressed. They had perished. To hope was delusion.  
 Their bodies, if found in a day or a week,  
 The sad truth could not even more certainly speak.  
 The gay world at the Islands made proper lament

For the hour ; and a thrill of true sorrow was sent  
Through some hearts when the story was told. Before night  
The quick lightning had spread it abroad ; and its flight  
Was a message of sadness to many.

One read

In the papers next day, with a black-letter head,  
Just a brief paragraph ; and it soberly said,  
“ Mr. Percival Trent, as a speaker well known,  
And his friend Mrs. Isabel Lee, out alone  
On the River St. Lawrence last night in a squall,  
Were capsized, and were both of them drowned.”

That was all.



#### XIV.



HE one reader knelt down in the pitiless  
gloom  
That came over her soul, as if sudden  
a tomb  
Had enveloped her there, and in syllables broken  
Besought the All-Father to send her  
some token

Of love and compassion to show her that still  
She could bow to his power, and suffer his will,  
Though it crush her, because for the best.

It was long  
In the dark of her doubt ere she caught the faint song  
Of her faith once again, like a bird that sings low  
In the shadows before all the world is aglow  
With another glad morning. At first she gave up  
To her grief unrestrained. Of the tear-tasting cup  
She drank deep, till its bitterness flooded her hope,  
Overwhelming it. Long as a life did she grope,  
So it seemed, like a person struck blind in the sun,  
Seeing nothing.

“O Lord! if thy will must be done,”  
She could only beseech, “in this terrible way,  
Take me also to thee in thy mercy, I pray.  
I am wicked and weak and unworthy, but hear  
To my pleading, O Lord, I implore!”



If the ear

Of the Infinite ever were open to all  
Who in sorrow's unreason thus bitterly call  
For the end, or if, hearing, he answered the cry  
Because merciful only, full many would die  
With their life in the bloom of its purpose. But God  
Is as wise as paternal. He spares not the rod  
Of affliction, however he loves us: Denying  
The answer we seek, he is touched by our crying,  
And gives, in the time of his wiser replying,  
The answer to profit us most.

Yet we plead

In the midst of our want for some possible need  
We believe to be ours; and we hold empty palms  
Up to God, while we cry for particular alms  
At his hand; and the boon that we seek might be worse  
For us ever than poverty's bitterest curse.  
Very blessed indeed are the poor, when they crave  
What would hinder and hurt, if the All-Father gave  
Without stint to their asking. More blessed are those  
Who in praying remember the All-Father knows  
Of their need even better than they, and bestows  
With a wisdom divine.

It was pitiful, first,

To see Geraldine clinging to all that was worst  
In her grief. He was dead, her one lover,—as true  
As the heart that so bitterly mourned him, she knew.  
He was dead, and thus ended her dream. She could never  
Again feel his tender caresses. Forever,  
Till death gave him back, so her sorrowing said,  
She must hunger for love, and be ever unfed.

By and by — she could hardly have told if a week  
Or a day had been passed in the gloom — she could seek



For disguising of comfort.

Death gives us some things  
For our absolute holding, that might have found wings,  
And been wafted beyond us; and so Death is kind.  
What he gives us, we keep; and if tears make us blind  
To the gift, and we see but a grave or a bier  
For a little, we come to a vision more clear  
Later on. Then we know that this token of Death  
Is immortal; that never of this can the breath  
Of regret say with sighing, "O change of the years!"  
That we never shall go with lamentings and tears  
On a wearisome search for the lost. What we hide  
In the peace of the grave will forever abide  
In its promise and grace, in its beauty and truth,  
For the mortal is age. Immortality's youth  
Can know nothing of age, or of change, or decay.  
It has never a morrow of fear. Its to-day  
Of content is eternal.

A glimmer of light  
Came to Geraldine out of the dark of her night.  
He was dead, her one lover; but thus he was hers  
Beyond shadow of doubting. No dimness that blurs  
Any distance could come between her and her own.  
They should never be separate. Weary and lone  
As her future might seem, he could never be far  
From her life and her love. No distrusting could mar  
Their companionship now evermore. Not a hint  
Of unfaith could be heard through the years. Without stint  
She might give of her heart to his memory fond,  
And forever be glad in the giving beyond  
Any possible shade of regret. Death had set  
The great seal of its silence on lips that were yet  
Full of utterance tender and true, and had stilled  
With its marvellous hush the heart-throbbings that thrilled,

And must thrill to the end, for herself.

Could it be

That this woman of women, this Isabel Lee,  
With her heart in her face, and her love in her hand,  
Might have won him away with her witchery bland?  
Could it be that some passion to flame might have fanned,  
That he never had dreamed of, asleep in his breast?  
Could it be that his love for herself, in the test  
Of some crucible heat in his life, might have burned  
Into nothingness? Might he some lesson have learned  
With the wisdom of love making wiser his heart,  
In which previous knowledge had never a part?  
If a question like these sought reply in her grief,  
In its possible doubt came a certain relief.  
If the sorrow so keen had been sent but to save  
From a sorrow far keener, the hurt that it gave  
Was the touch of a hand hurting only to shield:  
In the pain of its purpose there lingered concealed  
A sweet comfort to gladden and bless.

The allies

Of our happiness come to us oft in disguise,  
And we think they are foes. They are not as they seem,  
And we welcome them not to their mission supreme;  
But we turn in despair from besetting so sore,  
And would flee, if the way were but open before.  
Then we wait, as we must, in the struggles that keep  
All our being in terror, and out of the deep  
Of our peril we call for the succor delayed.  
In some day of clear vision we see there was aid  
Where we knew but assailing; and then, in surprise,  
With our gaze lifted up to the peaceable skies,  
We behold from our peril and pain a release,  
And are glad and content in the triumph of peace.

## XV.



FTER searching in vain the small island  
around,

Where no hint of the object he sought  
could be found,

Mr. Trent to the cabin returned. Mrs.  
Lee

Was awaiting him.

“Breakfast for you and for me  
Must be late,” he remarked but half anxiously. “We  
Are two castaways now, without means of support.  
For a little we promise to be but the sport  
Of such fortune as comes to us.”

Then he explained  
How their boat had been drifted away. It remained  
For them only to wait for some vessel in sight  
Or in hail, to be signalled, or told of their plight,  
When deliverance quickly would come; and meanwhile  
They must comfort themselves in the comforting smile  
Or the day, that gave sunlight to follow the rain,  
As the morrow will always.

He smothered the pain  
At his heart, and made merry with laugh and with jest  
As if never a dread of the future oppressed  
Or appalled him. His passion he met with resistance  
Begotten of struggle with self; and a distance  
Indefinite, infinite, widened and grew

Like a desert between them. Instinctive she knew  
He had conquered himself for the time. No regret  
For the past or the present his scrutiny met  
As he gazed in her beautiful face ; but serene  
She looked out on the blue of the sky, and the green  
Of the islands, and moulded her mood to his own.

So they waited and watched till the morning had grown  
Into mid-day, and patience with waiting had flown.  
They were out of the track of the steamers that plied  
The American channel : it happened, beside,  
That no boat from the Canada ports came along  
Until noon. When it came, on its decks were a throng  
Full of riotous mirth, on a pleasure-trip bent  
To the village some miles from the Bay ; but they lent  
Ready ears to the call for assistance, and sent  
Speedy means of relief.

“I can land you at Berne,”  
Said the captain, who hastened their story to learn,  
When they stood by his side. “You can dine there, and go  
To the Bay when you please. It’s a moderate row  
Of three hours, and the boatmen are plenty.”

And faint  
With their fasting, no longer inclined to complaint,  
They but languidly noted the beauties abounding,  
The merriment over the still water sounding,  
And heeded but little the comment they caused.  
When at length the slow steamer reluctantly paused  
At a rickety wharf, they went gladly ashore,  
While the vessel backed off, and its proper course bore  
Farther on.

Man is mortal. There’s nothing so tells  
Of mortality, nothing so certain repels  
The romance of our being, the essence and spirit

Of life, as the hunger that feeds it. Men fear it,  
And flee it; and yet in their folly they nurse it  
With spices and tonics, till wretched they curse it,  
And die of dyspepsia and doctors. The greed  
Of the animal dominates over the need  
Of the heart and the brain. And all sentiment waits  
Upon hunger; is happy or hurt as the fates  
Of the stomach decree. The day's measure is dinner.  
Man loves like a saint; but he eats like a sinner,  
Forgetting his love till his appetite flies,  
But remembering well when capacity cries  
To be spared.

At a quaint little inn they were greeted  
By fare not too fine, when at last they were seated  
Before it. But hunger for diet the meanest  
Gives sauce that is lively, and relish the keenest.  
They ate as if love were a manna untasted  
In wilderness ways; as if hearts had but hasted  
Their good to forget, or the lingering pain  
Of their sorrowful hurt in a marvellous gain.  
By and by they were ready to leave. Sweetly slept  
The wide reaches of water, unstirred, as they stepped  
In the skiff Mr. Trent had obtained. Like a mirror,  
The river reflected the sky, that seemed nearer  
Than ever to brood o'er the world. As serene  
As a picture of peace was the beautiful scene.  
The mid-afternoon sun, swinging low in its place,  
With an autumn-like glory suffused all the space  
Round about them. The far-away hill-tops were crowned  
As with silver. "Be still!" said the silence profound  
In suggestiveness sweet to the ear of the soul:  
"For the troubled in heart there is always a goal  
Of content. Mother Nature, with tenderness blind  
To the faults of her children, and ever inclined

To give gladness for sorrow, invites them to lie  
In her arms while the tumults of being surge by.  
She invites them in quiet and comfort to rest,  
From all weariness free, on her pitying breast;  
And Jehovah, in loving and tender accord,  
Says, 'Be still! and discover that I am the Lord.'"

There are times to be silent, — sweet seasons of calm,  
When the soul seems to catch the soft breath of a psalm;  
When the Infinite lifts up the finite, and bears  
It away from the lowland of troubles and cares;  
When we rise to a holier being, supernal  
In good and in blessing, with fields ever vernal,  
Where bloom the dear blossoms of beauty that hide  
From our happiness lower, where vistas are wide  
As a world for enchanting our rapturous gaze,  
And we look from our height with delight and amaze.

It was little they said as they floated away  
Through the silence serene on their course to the Bay.  
If the mood of the scene had not swayed them, the feeling  
Of each must have counselled to partial concealing;  
But above their own moods was the mood of the hour,  
And it silenced their speech with a mystical power  
That they could not divine. Yet for Percival Trent,  
Though the time was so full of supernal content,  
There was under it all, half unheeded, the ache  
Of a heart that has made the one bitter mistake  
That must ruin its peace evermore. When he rested  
His eyes on her face, he would gladly have breasted  
The billows of fate but to win it and hold it  
His own, to look into it ever, to fold it  
Henceforth in his loving embrace. But a boat's  
Length between them, the limitless ocean that floats



The great treasure of continents, sundered them far  
By its pitiless waves ; and Hope flung not a spar  
For his seizing, on which he might drift till he held  
Her to him, unresisting, forever. Impelled  
By the currents swift rushing around him, he knew  
He must call to her through the wide reach his " adieu."  
He must float wheresoever the wild waters bore,  
Though no haven he find on a rock-bordered shore.



The short, slow, lazy strokes of their boatman were swift  
To their longing desire. 'T would have pleased them to  
drift

In this quiet so tranquil forever. No haste  
Of the world was upon them. To linger, and taste  
Of the lotos-blooms thus, till forgetfulness came  
With its blessing of peace, who could chide them, or blame ?  
The long day was approaching its close when they neared

The hotel. To a few who there sat, they appeared  
As if raised from the deep ; but before the news spread  
To the many, that these were alive whom as dead  
All were mourning, they both slipped away out of sight.

From a sleep that was restful and soothing that night  
Into which he had sunk upon reaching his room,  
Percy Trent awoke late, and arose in the gloom  
To look out on the river's broad bosom. The glimmer  
Of moonlight, just gilding the trees with its shimmer  
And sheen, gave a color and glow to the dark ;  
And when, later, the moon had ascended the arc  
Till her beams fell in fulness, as soothing and tender  
As sleep was the glow of her affluent splendor.  
Yet restless and troubled did Trent linger there  
By the casement to gaze on a picture more fair  
Than the day, to be bathed in a glory more rare  
Than the noon's, but with bitterness thrilling his heart.  
Then he sat himself down, and besought the shy art  
Of the poet to soothe. Thus he pencilled

#### A P A R T.

Beyond the sea, beyond the sea,  
In some fair land to dream of thee  
To-night, my darling, would I be !

No softer breezes there might blow ;  
No sweeter music there might flow ;  
No moonlight there more tender glow.

My dreams might find no rarer bliss  
Than here they yield on nights like this,  
Wherein no richness do they miss.

Throughout the glory and the sheen,  
The sunset and the dawn between,  
No fairer picture might be seen.

On all the evening's quiet rare  
No benediction, as of prayer,  
More sweet and calm might linger there.

But waking, when the night was done,  
To dawn of day and rise of sun,  
To life and thought again begun,

Methinks 't would comfort bring to me  
To know between my love and thee  
Were reaching leagues and leagues of sea ;

To feel that distance real and wide  
Were keeping me from thy dear side,  
The sunlight of thy smiles to hide ;

To know that days must come and go,  
And moons must wax in cycles slow,  
Before thy presence I could know.



But here to-night the moonlight glows,  
And while the breeze so balmy blows,  
I seek in dreams a sweet repose.

It comes with restfulness and peace ;  
It brings my soul a glad release,  
While all my doubt and tumult cease.

Yet waking, with the dawn of day,  
My heart will see thee near, and say  
“ Good-morning, love ! ” and bid thee stay.

Then, as through distance, thy reply  
Will come, like breathings of a sigh,  
Or accents of a sad good-by.

“ Good-morning, love ! ” thou ’lt answer me ;  
But more than leagues and leagues of sea  
Will separate my life and thee.



## XVI.



HE next morning he copied his verses,  
and sent

Them to Isabel Lee with this message:—

“I meant

To take leave of the Islands to-day —  
and of you :

To depart from your presence without  
an adieu

Or a word of farewell was my purpose. I've stayed  
Far too long as it is. But some talk will be made  
On account of our recent survival: I'll tarry  
A day or two longer, and help you to parry  
The gossiping comment I helped to create.  
Thus I give my excuse for delay to the fate  
That would force me away from your side.

“When I go,

It will be to a future of struggles. I know  
What is duty. I know I should say my farewell  
To this month of delight with no feeling to tell  
Of my treason to love so long plighted. Distrust  
Of my manhood may come when I see, as I must,  
To what pitiful weakness I early am brought.  
I may wonder, perhaps, if when I shall have fought  
The hard battle, and won, this poor sham of a life  
Will be worth all the effort, the struggle, and strife.  
Yet I know what is duty, and, knowing, shall walk

In the line of it steady and brave, though it mock  
Me with bitter denial of strength. For we grope  
To the altitudes highest when being and hope  
Are in deepest eclipse by some fate unforeseen :  
So I comfort myself, with the shadows between  
My blind path and the sunlight shut out.

“ A defender  
Of right should not wave the white flag of surrender  
When wrong his position assails, though the wrong  
Come beguiling to peace with some snatch of a song  
That is pleasant to hear. And the wrong of this passion  
Of mine, that has come in such innocent fashion  
To capture and hold me a captive, must feel  
The quick arming of conscience within me, the leal  
And unyielding resistance of manhood, to meet  
And make combat against it. I know, I repeat,  
What is duty, — my duty, — and, knowing, abide  
By the knowledge. Henceforth in the past I will hide  
What is past ; and my present shall be — what it can.  
For the future — well, being is brief ; and the man  
Who gets through it the soonest in manliest way  
Has the happiest ending.

“ The major might say  
Something very like that, to be sure ; but his quarrel  
With life than my own is more ancient : the moral  
Of which rather pertinent fact is, that he  
Should be reconciled rather, and leave now to me  
The most bitter complaints about being. If I  
Am inclined to turn cynic, and utterance try  
That is doubtful and reckless, remember the stroke  
That is stabbing my soul to its quick. If I spoke  
As I feel, I should shock you with bitterest speech  
That a sane man could utter. But lips that can preach  
Wise philosophy e'er must be careful, and frame



Only language discreet, though the heart be aflame  
Just below."

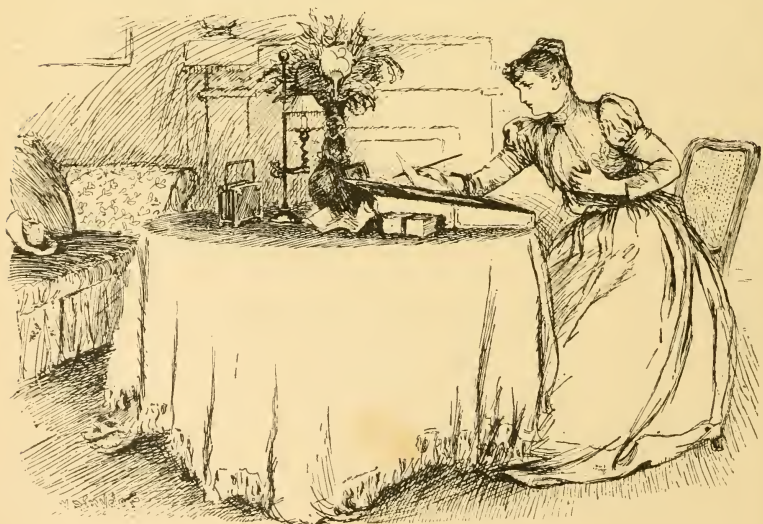
To which message she speedily gave  
A complaining, pathetic response:—

"You would save  
Me the pain of farewell. Let it be so; and when  
You depart on the morrow, as commoner men  
Hold my hand for a moment in theirs while they speak  
Their adieux, you shall clasp it as if in a week  
You might take it again in your own. And return  
When you will, soon or late,—be it soon!—you shall learn  
How my heart has been keeping its tenderest things  
For your welcome; shall find with what gladness it brings  
The poor offering up to your altar, and waits  
For some look warm with loving to cheer the hard fates,  
And to kindle the ashes to flame. With your pledge  
To remain as my friend, I can stand on the edge  
Of this wilderness where I am walking, and seem  
To catch glimpses across to the land of my dream;  
Can forget for a time with what bitterness all  
Who are shut out of Canaan must hunger and call,  
Mid the flesh-pots of Egypt, for good that they miss.  
You are not to deny me your friendship; and this,  
If it tenderer be than the many could give,  
If it nurture itself at love's fountain, and live  
Thus a life that is warmer than others may see,  
Shall be beauty and brightness and blessing to me.

"Duty takes you away for a while, so we'll phrase it.  
And duty—we're given to foster and praise it;  
But ugly enough it can be, and as hateful  
As sin. There is nothing in life quite as fateful,  
Or so I believe. I am sick in my soul  
Of its bitter exactions. The costliest toll

That we yield on the highway of being is paid  
To these, whether we will it or no. We are laid  
Under tribute, indeed, to a Cæsar who claims  
All we have, all the best of our longing and aims;  
And we give without hope of appeal. Do not wonder  
I put the case plain and with feeling; for under  
This cruel oppression of duty I cry  
In a poverty wretched for riches gone by,  
And no answer.

“To-day we shall meet as do those  
In whose soberer veins never surges and glows  
The warm current of passion; shall trifle with speech  
As if never the heart underneath could beseech  
For a clear revelation in word, as if lips  
Were commissioned, indeed, to put thought in eclipse;  
Shall be careless, untroubled, and gay with the rest,  
Though a riotous tumult may stir either breast  
To pathetic, unspoken appeal. So we play  
At the mirth that is mockery mad, and obey



The mad will of the world, that would bid us conceal  
What the will of our hearts would so gladly reveal.  
We shall meet as they meet who have little to gain  
In the meeting, no deep-stirring pleasure the pain  
Of their yesterday's parting to stifle; no burning  
Unrest through the brief separation; no yearning  
For glance of an eye, or for touch of a hand,  
Speaking language that love may not misunderstand.  
Let it be so. I'm used to all bitter restraint  
Upon gladness and warmth that can make the heart faint  
With repression and hunger. No bitterest trial  
Henceforth can be harder than this of denial  
That through the long years I have helplessly known.  
I should say that my heart must be hardened to stone,  
If it were not that now, as I think of you here,  
I can feel its quick throbbings.

“You may not be near

In the flesh: in the spirit you cannot go far  
From my side, though you go the world over. We are  
As apart as are darkness and day, though we walk  
Arm in arm a day's journey. So distances mock  
At conditions, and laugh at desire. So the flesh is  
Divorced from the spirit it feebly enmeshes,  
And twain they must be evermore.”

As he read

Her response, to his feverish longing it said  
More than language the strongest could utter. It throbbed  
With the pain and the passion behind it that robbed  
Her who wrote of her peace. In its silence it spake,  
Even more than its speech, of the wearying ache  
Of her soul. It aroused all his sympathies, strong  
And intense as his love, to the uttermost. Wrong  
As it might be to stay, he was tempted to bide  
The results of a wrong very sweet by her side,

And remain; for she needed him. Hunger like hers  
Can be fed by one bounty alone. It occurs  
To those wealth-giving hearts only, born to make gift  
Of their riches unchecked, to go out from their thrift  
Into want such as this. So he reasoned. He knew  
That his need of her, born but with yesterday, grew  
Every hour. Could he smother it, crush it, and kill it?  
Is hunger a thing to forget, if you will it?  
Will want, lean and wolfish, grow comelier there  
If you sit in its presence and fancy it fair?

When they met, half a hundred were hearing her tell  
How the storm came upon them. She pictured it well,  
And in spirit dramatic. How many could guess  
That her language, so fitting, and free to express



The alarm of the moment, the peril and stress  
Of the time, was a mantle to cover the feeling  
Far deeper? that words thus intense were concealing  
The incident's actual color and glow?  
That the mood of that night never mortal might know  
Save herself and the man whom she greeted as one  
Of her commonest friends when he joined them?

“Well done,  
Good and faithful,” the major declared in his light,  
Flippant way. “Though you gave us a horrible fright,  
We forgive you. But don't undertake the heroic  
Again with this cousin of mine. She's a stoic,  
I grant, and would make not a word of complaint  
To be cast away often, if only some saint  
Of romance would invoke with his kind benediction  
Such company pleasant; but harrowing fiction  
So very romantic too pungently savors  
Of fact.”

“We will spare you such odious flavors,  
I think, in the future,” said Trent. “Mrs. Lee  
Is as patient as any lost Crusoe would see  
His companion in trouble; and none could desire  
Better company, should he unwisely aspire  
To the life of a castaway. One such experiment  
Answers, however. There's not enough merriment  
In it to make us demand an *encore*.  
We are satisfied quite, without crying for more.”

“I supposed you were fond of positions dramatic,  
And might not object to one slightly aquatic,”  
Said Mellen, satirical. “Poets are pardoned  
For tastes rather perilous. Fancies have hardened  
Their sensitive shrinking from facts. The romantic  
In dreams should not render them foolishly frantic



If coming to active reality. Most  
Of the guild, I suspect, would incline to make boast,  
Soon or late, of a thrilling and strange episode  
So uncommon as yours, in an epic or ode."

"Now I warn you to spare us your comments derisive,  
For once," Mrs. Lee with a manner decisive  
Declared. "You would make of an epic or ballad  
One element only of bitter-sweet salad  
For cynics to feed on, who'd say grace with sneers,  
And would smile in derision at sentiment's tears.  
You who laugh at poetical things of romance,  
And so boldly charge at them a-tilt with your lance  
Ever drawn, are so many unwise Sancho Panzas,  
Because you could never pen passable stanzas  
Yourselves, and so win the world's plaudit for wages.  
The prose of our being has many dull pages:  
The poetry of it is none too profuse,  
And each incident striking, I think, has its use.  
What this recent adventure of ours may have meant,  
I am puzzled to tell; but perhaps Mr. Trent  
Will some picture find in it to grace, by and by,  
The one poem each poet ambitious should try  
To embalm himself in." And she laughed.

"From such banter

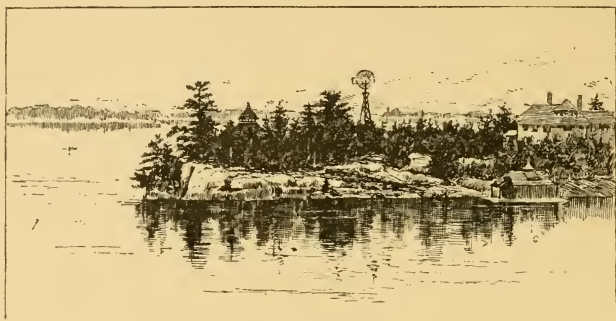
A Pegasus modest would flee at a canter,"  
He parried. "Mine dare not remain." And he bowed,  
Self-possessed and amused, to the gathering crowd,  
And betook his way down to the river, his heart  
Strangely stirring within him. The marvellous art  
Of the woman he loved, in so meeting with grace  
Unconfused the demand of the time and the place,  
Made him wonder. No woman beside, he believed,  
Could have faced the surprise of the hour, and deceived





All who saw her and heard her so soon into thinking  
 The episode fruitless of love. Without shrinking,  
 She told all there was of that notable night  
 For the curious ear; and her silence was quite  
 Unsuspected concerning the holier things  
 He must set himself quick to forget; for the stings  
 Of his conscience were cutting and keen. The beginning  
 Of passion despotic was bitter as sinning  
 When sin has been drunk to the dregs. Now for him  
 There was only a fate full of wretchedness grim,  
 And to-morrow must usher it in. He would start  
 On the early boat, leaving at five, and depart  
 Without word of adieu. And this calm afternoon

He would seek for his spirit some balm-laden boon  
In the quiet of channels none other might find,  
Wherein beauty and redolent odor combined,  
And where dreaming, aglow like the blush of a rose,  
Should beguile the unrest of his soul to repose.



## XVII.



HE pale gold of the west into crimson  
had burned,

And then faded to purple, before he  
returned.

He had done more than dream in  
the hours intervening ;

Had pondered half wisely and well  
on the meaning

Of passion so futile, so bitter, so rife  
With the seeds of all bitterness, meeting his life  
Where its path appeared gladdest ; had wondered if so  
Into every existence must mad currents flow,  
Making turbulence where should be placidest peace ;  
Had questioned if ever this tumult would cease  
That now troubled his soul ; and had reasoned that being  
Is only a cruel and blind unforeseeing  
Of problems we never may find to be soluble.  
Out with a friend, and inclined to be voluble,  
Trent would have talked in the dubious tones  
Of a man who has battled with fate, and who owns  
To his utter defeat, who is idly indignant  
With life and its lessons.

The beauties benignant

Amid which he rowed could not suddenly quiet  
The feverish pulse that so boldly ran riot  
Within him ; no balmiest opiate breezes

Could bear him at once the glad blessing that eases  
Tormenting thus born of some lingering bane.  
Yet at evening he found himself back, with the pain  
At his heart rather stupefied ; found himself ready



To meet a gay welcome with nerves that were steady,  
And voice that could syllable badinage gay  
As the gayest, nor once by a tremor betray  
Any deep hidden feeling.

That night, as the few  
Whom he daily had met, and thus pleasantly knew  
In such casual way, were about to take leave  
Of each other, he mentioned his going.

“I grieve  
To announce that good-night must be also good-by  
In my own case,” he said, “though I leave with a sigh  
Of regret that the summer so nearly is spent.”

“And you go in the morning? I think, Mr. Trent,  
You should kindly have told us your purpose, that we

Might prepare for the parting," said Isabel Lee  
With surprise well affected, her manner as free  
From all touch of restraint, and as simply well bred,  
As if never a tenderer word had been said  
Between this man and her. "We shall see you again  
Before winter?" she asked; and as commoner men  
Took the hand she extended, politely he took it  
In formal farewell, and as lightly forsook it,  
Determined to show that he also could cover  
All signs that might hint of his being a lover.

"Perhaps. I have promised a night in November  
At L——, and may call at that time. I remember  
My friends when I can," as if most to forget  
Were his custom exacting.

Some words of regret  
From the others were spoken in courteous phrase.

"I may meet you in Rivermet one of these days,"  
Said the major, with manner as easy and hearty  
As if the brief sentence were not made a party  
To eager suspicion, and wish to detect  
Through the words, or their carefully noted effect,  
Any reason for Trent's early going.

Unshaken  
And cool as the major himself, Trent had taken  
His leave of them all in a moment, and stood  
On the ample veranda alone.

"Very good  
As a piece of lay acting, that was, I admit;  
But there's something not hinted, I'm sure, under it,"  
Major Mellen remarked by and by to the major,  
There being no other man near; "and I'll wager  
A box of Havanas that Bell has been flirting



With Trent till he flees her with wound that is hurting  
Him hard. She can stab with most delicate art.  
Can it be that the girl ever had any heart?  
What a marvellous actress she'd make! She had known  
Of his plan for departure, of course, but has shown  
An indifferent ignorance mighty well feigned;  
And there's reason, I'm certain. The man had remained  
Here a fortnight beyond his original date:  
He'd have tarried a full fortnight longer, if fate  
Had not shown him his danger. He'll shun Rivermet  
And Miss Geraldine Hope till this fair Juliet  
Be forgotten. And somehow you can't soon forget  
Such a woman," he added, with grimace that spoke  
Of unpleasant remembrance his language awoke.

"It is well that I quietly published my going,"  
Thought Trent, as he looked on the river deep flowing  
Before him, the night-breeze but tenderly kissing it.  
"Were I without the least word to be missing, it  
Might cause remark, and then gossip would say  
There was reason peculiar for going away.  
I suspect that the major, keen-scented, quick-eyed,  
Some hint of the truth has already descried:  
His allusion to Rivermet may have been wide  
Of all purpose he had, except simply to see  
If, in parting thus early from Isabel Lee,  
I should hasten to Geraldine Hope. Having heard  
Our reputed engagement discussed, it occurred  
To him, doubtless, that I have been guilty of treason."  
He felt his face flush in the dark, as if reason  
Were ample for such an unpleasant impression.  
"My self-respect once was my surest possession,  
I fancied: I'm losing my grip on it fast.  
Can a future of duty deep cover this past



So it cannot stare up at me pallid and white,  
Like the face of a friend unforgiving, whom quite  
I have killed with keen cruelty? Can I still live  
My poor future so bravely, that self can forgive  
The sad wrong I have done it, and lift up its head  
As if shame were not living, and trust were not dead?  
Yonder river runs tranquil and sweet as it glides  
To the sea; but the ocean's unquenchable tides  
Are but bitterness all. Do I stand on the brink  
Of a sea as resistless and bitter, where sink  
The sweet hopes of these earlier years? Must I sail  
By the compass of duty, though borne by a gale  
Of fierce passions to harbor unkind?"

So he mused  
And he questioned till midnight. His conscience refused  
The short comfort of sleep until well toward the morning.  
He rose in good time for the steamer, and scorning  
The pitiful weakness that so overpowered  
His strength, and compelled him to fly like a coward,  
He walked to the landing, and hastened aboard.

As he sat on the deck, the glad sunrise restored  
Him in part to himself. He is wanton, in truth  
(Who is farther away from his age than his youth),  
Who can see the dawn flush, the horizon fast redden,  
The color burn into the skies that were leaden,  
The stars slip away into measureless spaces,  
The mountains grow rosy and glad as their faces  
Look sunward and catch the first smile of the day,  
And not thrill with the glory revealed, and not say  
In his heart a thanksgiving.

The Islands quick faded  
In mellowest distance. The sunlight, unshaded  
By fleck of a cloud, or by film of a mist,

Lay across the broad river, and lovingly kissed  
Every ripple to laughter and silence. A spell  
Of enchanting content on the voyager fell :  
From this land of the real all gladly he turned  
To a country of dreams where they never have learned  
To forget and be wise.

And the day wore along.

When the quivering steamer dashed into the strong,  
Angry sweep of the rapids, Trent roused to the scene,  
And became, till it passed them, a spectator keen.  
Did they typify being, *his* being? Must he  
From the currents of peace irresistibly flee  
To such wild buffetings? Was there nothing before  
Like the beauty behind, where the rush and the roar  
Of this channel tempestuous early should fade  
Into murmurous music, Æolian made  
By the harp of his memory?

Eager and swift

The boat flew to the beckoning billows that lift  
Far above the sharp ledges at anchor beneath,  
And that over a current so treacherous wreathe  
Into sparkle and foam. In the swirl and the sweep  
Of the waves, that so madly and merrily leap,  
They went madly and merrily downward careering,  
No anger of rock or of river once fearing, —  
A spirited race as with water is run!

Where the silver St. Francis, asleep in the sun,  
Smiled them welcome unworded, they drifted from sound  
Into silence, — a silence as sweet and profound  
As is midsummer calm, — and from struggle to rest.  
So there come to our lives, when we stand the hard test  
Of the billows that buffet us, reaches so still  
That we drift in delight with the current's calm will,



And find peace.

The broad lake of the river was smooth  
 As the sky overhead, and its beauty might soothe  
 Any trouble of soul. Far away on the left  
 The low spire of St. Regis in peacefulness cleft  
 The horizon of blue; far away to the right  
 The blue hills of the south faintly bounded the sight;  
 And before them the river's magnificence swept,  
 As the steamer straight onward her patient way kept,  
 To the narrower channels below. Here and there  
 A stray water-fowl, lazily beating the air,  
 Was the only suggestion of life beyond reach  
 Of the vessel itself: if the silence had speech,  
 It was only an echo of yesterday's life,  
 Or it hinted, mayhap, of some possible strife  
 Yet to be.

As the sun was fast sinking, its flame  
 Of white heat into rosy red burning, they came

To the river's superlative charm, — the La Chine.  
It is just a mad passion of waters between  
Two long levels of tranquil repose. The St. Lawrence  
Here dashes the majesty grand of its torrents  
Swift down the decline; here it hurls them in wrath  
High above the rough ledges that torture its path;  
Here it ripples and laughs, here it seethes and it surges,  
As on to St. Peter's sweet quiet it urges  
Its dangerous way; here it dances and sings;  
Here it pours and it roars, and its wild current flings  
Into spray; here, with grandeur majestic, it sweeps  
O'er its breakers, and smooth and unbroken it leaps  
From the crest of the low cataract; here it beats  
Into fury along the sharp headlands, retreats  
From its futile attack with the thunder of hate,  
And renews it again; here it flies to the fate  
That awaits it, with passionate force; here it lingers  
As if it were clasping compassionate fingers  
In loving farewell; here it hurries and flashes,  
And scurries and gleams, and in mad columns crashes  
Against the high rocks that defy it insultingly;  
Here it springs over the ledges exultingly,  
Breaks into foam, and goes merrily drifting  
And lifting, and leaping and plunging, and shifting  
From color to color, as if there were dyes  
Of all marvellous tints where it flashes and flies;  
Here it lifts the stout prow that encounters it, sways it  
With terribly masterful will that betrays it  
Almost to disaster and death; here you feel  
A quick shiver of fear course along the boat's keel,  
Till she struggles with pain like a person, and shudders  
With live apprehension, and writhes in her rudder's  
Strong hold, and leaps forward at length as if greeting  
Her moment of mastery, heart and soul beating

With martyrlike purpose heroic : for here  
She may sail with the sky bending over her clear  
As a crystal, the winds in Euroclydon's caves  
All asleep, and yet meet as wild tempest as raves  
When the demon of storm his black anger has hurled  
O'er the waters, and God has forgotten the world.

As he stood on the bow of the steamer, Trent saw  
The smooth waters uplift, as if swept by a flaw  
Of some wind that he felt not. A rift it appeared  
At the first ; but as to it they steadily neared,  
It grew angry and strong as the surf of the ocean :  
He saw the wild channels in wilder commotion,  
And heard their low thunder, more sullen and loud,  
Like a warning to venture no farther. The crowd  
Gathered round him, alert and intent. At the wheel,  
The grim face of their pilot, with muscles of steel  
Quick to answer command, was immovably set,  
Looking into the torrent beyond. As they met  
The first break of the water, a breathless suspense  
Came upon them, a fear that no human defence  
Could avail against madness like this.

Through the leaping  
And boiling and thundering waves they went sweeping  
And surging, a sense as of rapidly sinking  
Within them, a tardy and cowardly shrinking  
From fury still madder to come. And yet faster  
They swept through this turbulent hell of disaster,  
Where ruin and wreck seem forever at home.  
Through the billows of green and the breakers of foam,  
Sinking down with a tremor and thrill o'er the ledges  
Beneath, and careening far over the edges  
Of cataracts highest, the stout vessel tossed  
Like a shell in the surf, its swift course often crossed

By the outjutting rocks that so cruelly waited  
To crush it, but always as happily fated  
To shun its hard foes, and each moment confounded  
By terrors yet greater.

The thunders resounded  
In mightier music majestic ; the leap  
Of the waters was wilder and fiercer ; the sweep  
Of their desperate will conquered being and breath  
As the gasp of the dying is conquered by death.  
Still the pilot peered out on the tempest before,  
Undismayed by its terrible tumult and roar,  
And the captain stood silent and stern at his bells,  
With a look as intense as if tolling farewells.  
'Twas a mad, irresistible race with the devils  
Of furious flood, where their turbulent revels  
Are maddest,—a race to remember as glorious,  
Once you have won it, and panting, victorious,  
Through its wild pleasure and peril at last  
To the tortuous channel below you have passed,  
And you know by the quieter waters, serene  
As the sunset, you safely have run the La Chine.



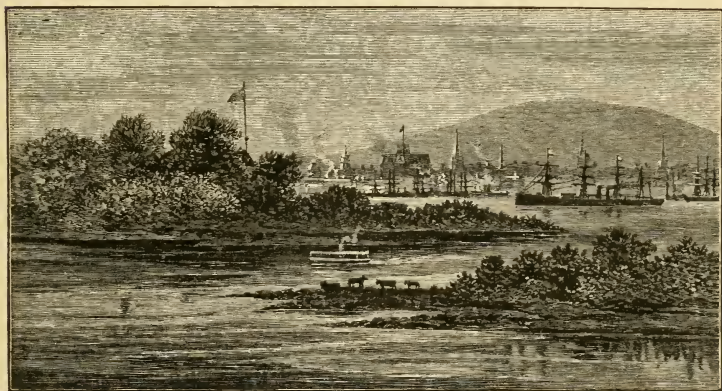


## XVIII.



RENT remained for a day, but to pay  
the brief call  
Of a tourist in passing, at gray Mon-  
treal;  
Then uneasy, uncertain, he walked the  
boat's deck  
That should land him next morning at  
quainter Quebec.

Until late in the evening he paced up and down,  
Looking back on the walls of the vanishing town,  
Looking out on the opposite islands low lying  
In beauty of green, on the sky that was dyeing  
Itself in the crimson and scarlet and gold



Of the sunset, with eyes half indifferent. Cold  
To the color that warmed all about him, and glowed  
The glad heart like a dream of the tropics, he rode  
Through the lingering twilight, and into the dark.  
The dim shores faded out. A late fisherman's bark  
Came in call, and stole by like a ghost, with its sails  
Wing-and-wing, as if wooing the slumbering gales.  
Some hilarious raftsman, afar out of sight,  
Let his lusty-lunged laughter float out on the night  
Till it frightened the echoes. The passengers aft  
Over gossip and story occasional laughed,  
Till Trent listened in positive pain. He was lonely,  
And longing, and heartsick, as they can be only  
Who taste the one pleasure of life but to miss it,  
Who pine for the face of a friend, when to kiss it  
Would open the windows of heaven.

He went in  
The deserted saloon, compensation to win  
For his loneliness there, if he could. Sitting down  
To the open piano, he hastened to drown  
His regrets and unrest in its magical flow.  
To his delicate touch it responded in low,  
Sympathetic sonatas, that lingered and thrilled  
On the sensitive ear, or in melodies filled  
With the wordless compassion of song. So he played  
As the mood was upon him. Some quiet ones made  
Their way in from the deck, and close up to his side;  
But he heeded them not — or his manner belied  
Any heeding. Enrapt in the harmonies rare,  
He could easy forget every trouble and care,  
All the common surroundings of time and of place.  
Through the sweetness of song, some enrapturing grace  
Breathed upon him its witchery soft, till he knew  
Neither doubt, nor misgiving, nor dread. Thus he grew

To be soberly glad. Thus he sang, ere he ceased,  
In a strain that the gladness of singing increased,  
Of a lesson he learned from

## THE LIGHT IN THE EAST.

I saw the day fade into darkness ;  
I saw the glow shade into gloom ;  
And I felt a great dread in my soul as I said,  
“Can the night bring a bud to its bloom?  
Can there ever be born a bright morrow  
Of sorrowful dark such as this?  
Will the sun ever shine with its glory divine,  
And the beauty and blessing I miss?”

I sat in my doubt half despairing ;  
I knew not the way I should grope :  
So I wondered and wept by my hope as it slept,  
And I feared it the death of my hope.  
More deep was the darkness, and denser  
The gloom that enveloped me there ;  
And my faith grew so weak, it no longer could speak  
The sweet syllables shaping a prayer.

O Father, forbearing and tender,  
Have mercy on souls that are dumb !  
To their silence reply through the dark, “It is I !”  
As in comforting love thou dost come.  
The need may be deepest that cries not  
For lack of strong agony’s word :  
O Father, come near with thy comfort and cheer,  
And give answer as if thou hadst heard !

A bird singing low in the silence  
Brought healing for hurting to me :  
For I saw, looking far by the horizon bar,

What the sons of men ever may see, —  
The gloom of the midnight departing;  
The day, from its bondage released,  
Stealing up through the space, with a light on its face, —  
The glad, wonderful light in the east.

“The night of my vigil shall vanish,”  
I sang with the song of the bird;  
“For the sun never set on a yesterday yet,  
To rise on a morrow deferred.  
The dawn is as sure as the darkness,  
The pledge is as true as the boon;  
For the light in the east never failed us, nor ceased  
To make certain the morning and noon.”

As he sang in a barytone mellow and trained,  
With a feeling and thrill that were deeper than feigned,  
Many lingered and listened, and finally sighed,  
That a song so beguiling and glad should have died  
Into silence so soon.

He arose and went out.  
He had sung himself back into peace from the doubt  
He had wrestled with so through the days. It might be  
That the morrow would wound him afresh: he was free  
From all weary besetments to-night. He could rest  
In the darkness untroubled by dread, and possessed  
By no fear for the end.

The next morning the height  
Of historic Cape Diamond first greeted his sight,  
And above the gray walls of the citadel hung  
The tricolor of Britain. A battle-ship swung  
By its anchor, asleep in the harbor below.  
The bright roofs of the city took dazzle and glow  
From the sun but just risen. Without haze, or the fleck  
Of a cloud, the sky shone upon silent Quebec.

When the steamer swung round in the channel, and swept  
With some bustle and stir to her landing, he stepped  
From the New to the Old ; for the centuries waited  
Here once, and since then have been always belated.  
As up to the gate from the river you climb,  
You go back a long cycle or two into time ;



You see round you the life, and the works, and the ways  
Of the world in its ruder and ruddier days,  
When the color of being so readily run  
To the surface, that battle and pillage were done  
For the sake of the doing ; when war was a thing  
To be studied and learned for the fame it should bring ;  
When the shedding of blood was a part of Christianity,  
Practised and preached for the good of humanity.



Please don't infer that they pillage and plunder  
To-day in the sleepy old town; do not wonder  
If Trent beheld murder and rapine and lust  
As in wars mediæval, where settles the dust  
Of the past undisturbed on a present too quiet  
To start a more valiant crusade than a riot.  
I made, it may be, an unfortunate reference,  
Too comprehensive and broad, out of deference  
Only, in fact, to the city's antiquity.  
History simply cōcedes the iniquity  
To it, 't is true, of repelling long sieges,  
Defending the onset of loyalty's lieges,  
Withstanding the shock of the enemy's hosts,  
And compelled to see carnage unsought.

But the ghosts

Of dead heroes yet walk the high battlements round it;  
Red fame has a place where men sought it and found it;  
Still grim and defiant re-echo the guns  
That in silence have slept through a century's suns;  
In the cry of the sentry a dim challenge calls  
Out of long-buried lips from the citadel walls;  
The wild music of musketry breaks on the air,  
Where the garner is death for the gallant who dare;  
And above all the present's calm quietude reigns  
The fierce tumult of strife upon Abraham's Plains.

Through the quaint, crooked city our friend made his way,  
Searching out the things quaintest by night and by day;  
Walking over the battle-field hard by the town;  
From the parapets airy and bold, looking down;  
Looking on at the garrison's dashing parade;  
Idly watching the pride and the fashion displayed  
On the terrace; or bowling right merrily on,  
Through the Gate of St. Charles or the Gate of St. John,



In a rocking *calèche*, to the country that sleeps  
Beyond city and suburb at peace, or where leaps  
Montmorenci in beautiful haste to be wed  
With the wooing St. Lawrence. The life that he led  
For a week was the life of a dreamer unstirred  
By the impulse of action. He languidly heard  
The faint callings of duty, and answered them not.  
In the midst of such sleepy surroundings, forgot  
Was the wide-awake being and doing so near  
In his future. The lotos-blooms redolent here  
He would press to his lips, and forget.

But he failed

In forgetting. Regret his good purpose assailed,  
And wherever he went he was haunted by thought  
Of what had been and must be. His dreams ever caught  
The sweet flavor of emerald islands, the sheen  
Of the waves as they twain had long drifted between  
In those days of delight, and his sweetest repose  
Was a blessed remembrance.

Most happy are those

Who have only remembrances blessed! who turn  
From no memories bitter, with feelings that burn  
Like a fire in the breast! They have come to the garden  
Of paradise so without knowing it. Pardon  
For sins of the past cannot blesseder be  
Than in granting forgetfulness certain and free  
Of the sin put away, that henceforth it may never  
Stand ghostly and grim by the present's endeavor,  
And mock it, and make it afraid.

Though the time

Was so full of a dreamy content, to the rhyme  
Of each day a sad music was set, like a moan  
Amid mellowest laughter, — a low undertone,  
Never ceasing, half heeded, half heard, but existent,

And paining the ear of the soul with persistent  
Continuance. Walk where he would, he could hear  
The low pulsing of pain far away, and yet near  
As the conscience within. He could never forget  
To the full of forgetting, so long as Regret  
Was his daily companion, rose with him at dawn,  
And sat with him at eve when the twilight was gone  
Till he bade her a weary good-night.

At the end

Of a week he took up delayed duty, and penned  
A long letter to Geraldine Hope. If it read  
Like his former epistles, but little it said  
Of the ardent affection of lovers, implying  
What might have been written, in no wise denying  
By evident lack what he often had told.  
While he wrote it, in fact, if the love had grown cold  
That he felt for her once, it was only, it seemed  
To himself, by comparison. Passion undreamed  
In its mastery, coming unheralded quite,  
Had not hidden this older love out of his sight  
As a thing very worthful and sweet.

Are degrees

With the heart so impossible ever? Are these  
Who have burned the hot flame of fierce passion's desire  
To its ashes, no more to be warmed by the fire  
Of some calm-glowing feeling? Believe it who will.  
You may sit by the blaze of your passion, and thrill  
With quick grief as it flickers, and falters, and dies;  
But some day from the embers new color may rise  
Into glowing, and gladden you. Grieving is brief,  
Or the sum of this being were simply a grief.

## XIX.



Y DEAR GERALDINE,—

“Pardon unwonted delay,”

So his letter began, “in my writing.

Don’t play

At the brief indignation you never  
must feel

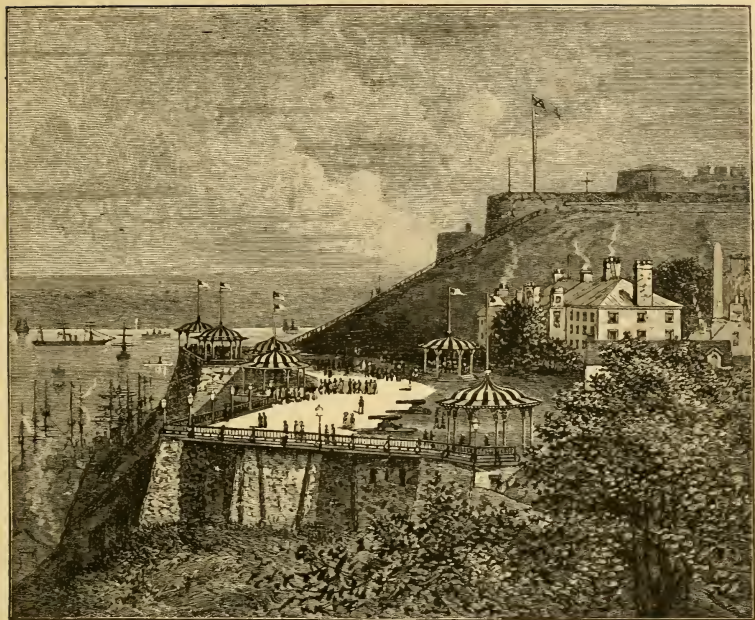
At my gravest shortcomings, nor try to conceal  
The sweet fact that long silence has new revelation  
Of need. I’ve been dreaming, and lacked animation  
For more. That’s the only excuse I can render.  
There’s something that lurks in the crystalline splendor  
Of summer days here that I cannot explain;  
It has proved, in my case, a most excellent bane  
For the poison of purpose to do. I have drifted  
From morning to night like the veriest gifted  
Do-nothing of genius,—my only ambition  
To see, and to feel, and be glad. If the mission  
Of sunshine were ever performed as a healing  
And free soporific, in balminess stealing  
Through heart and through brain, and so lifting the weight  
Of hard duty and care, it is here. How the late  
Mellow twilights beguile to repose! How the calm  
Of each morning seems pressing some opiate balm  
On the eyelids! How earth in a beautiful swoon  
Seems to lie through the glow of each brief afternoon!  
How the far-away mountains are hallowed with rest,

As if truly the summits of God! How the west  
Into marvellous color and majesty glows,  
As the sun to his morrow magnificent goes  
Through a gateway of gold!

“You may say, if you choose,  
I am florid in feeling. I never shall lose  
Out of memory’s life the week’s rest I have known  
Here in quiet Quebec. When I weary am grown  
Amid duties to come, I shall dreamily drift  
Out of bustle and crowd, to the holiday gift  
A kind fortune has granted to have and to keep,  
And be sweetly refreshed as if gladdened by sleep.

“Having been the whole round of the places historical  
Here, I might now, in a style paregorical  
(Sleepy, you know, like the air of the town),  
And with guide-pages handy, proceed to put down  
All the facts and the figures important. But no!  
You shall wait yet a year, and come with me, and grow  
Even wiser than I am concerning the place.  
Do I see a glad flush stealing over your face  
At the prospect so pleasant? I like the half-blush  
That you wear at odd times, when you say I must hush  
Some fond nonsense or other. You’re prettiest then.  
Do not show the same blush to less fortunate men,  
Lest they envy me more!

“As for history here —  
In the magical glow of to-day’s atmosphere  
There is little but being historic. And yet,  
If I lounge on the Terrace when Fashion has set  
Its gay current there soon, I shall see as much pride  
As disports itself now on the popular side  
Of Broadway, New York, in this day of our Lord  
Eighteen hundred and blank. If I greatly abhorred



The Dame Fashion, I'd say with some bitterness mild,  
*She* was wrinkled and gray, even history's child;  
 And I'd point you, in proof, to that notable twain  
 Who began their existence in clothes rather plain,  
 And became quite ashamed to be seen. But I'll grant  
 That the pride which so gayly would flutter and flaunt  
 The fine trappings of dress is a modernized thing,  
 And that over the picture the promenades fling  
 A bright hue of the present, to lessen and lighten  
 The half-sombre tint of the past, and to heighten  
 The picturesque whole.

"Yet you feel, when you stand  
 On the parapet yonder, as though in a land



Of dim yesterdays fled ; and you walk the quaint street  
As if certain some knight mediæval to meet ;  
And you listen to Mass in the Jesuit piles  
Of the priests, as if monks moved about in the aisles  
From the far Middle Ages.

“ Poor priest-ridden people !

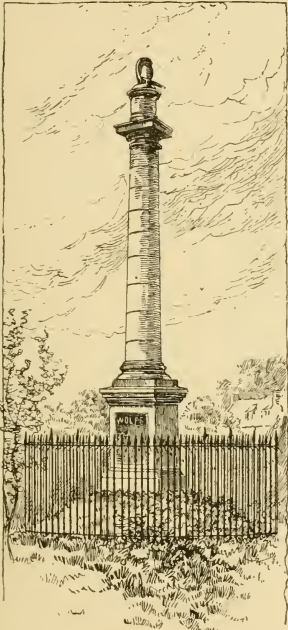
If only there lifted some truth-telling steeple  
To point the true way they must go ! But the spire  
Of the Jesuit seldom points heavenward higher  
Than head of the prelate or priest ; and the soul  
Of the dead or the dying must pay proper toll,  
Or go seeking its paradise long. In this dreary  
Sahara of doubt the one spot that is cheery  
And vernal alone is the Virgin. Dear Mother  
Of Christ ! Because each, in believing, his brother  
Becomes, we may hallow her thus with our love  
As the mother of all ; but before and above  
The sweet mother Madonna forever is Christ ;  
And whoever from worshipping him is enticed  
To a less adoration, while walking the way  
Of a faith without fruitage, must penalty pay,  
And not penance. Some paintings a worthy grace give  
To the Virgin ; but Christ as an infant must live  
In the arms of the mother Madonna, or hang  
From the cross where he died with the crucifix pang  
On his face, as the Jesuits have it, instead  
Of ascending on high, from his place with the dead,  
And remaining a Saviour for all, with no need  
Of a priest to stand up, and with him intercede  
For the seeking and penitent.

“ Battle-fields teach

Many lessons. The monuments on them may preach  
A wise gospel that calls for no shedding of gore.  
On the plains where the men of Montcalm fled before



The wild charge of their foes, is the legend, 'Here died Wolfe victorious.' Life is a battle-field wide,  
 And we fight for the right or the wrong till the end.  
 I have wondered how many who fall, my dear friend,  
 Are the victors, how many go down to defeat,  
 Never gaining the victory certain and sweet,  
 But discouraged, disheartened, dismayed. Marble shaft  
 Never rises above them; no spring where they quaffed



The last cup of refreshing is  
 pointed to those  
 Who still linger, and face the  
 fierce onset of foes  
 That the world never sees; but  
 they slumber unsung,  
 And are silent forever. God  
 pity the tongue  
 That prays feebly for help from  
 defeat at the last,  
 When it ought to be singing  
 thanksgiving, as fast  
 It sinks down into silence! I  
 think it were blest  
 Thus to die like this soldier of  
 fortune, who pressed  
 To his lips a clear draught from  
 the spring, and then went  
 Into rest, let us hope, with a  
 warrior's content,

Having won. But he won as must all, having fought  
 Like a faithful and true knight of God. Had he sought  
 Cheaper victory, doubtless defeat would have robbed  
 Him of glory and fame. Never faithfulness throbbed  
 Out of life into death without recompense just,  
 Though it come when the heart is but ashes and dust.

“But I’ll spare you philosophy further. Please credit  
This much to the mood of my pen, that but led it  
Astray.

“I have lingered here longer than most  
Of the sight-seers do, who ‘from pillar to post’  
Hurry on as if fevered with haste. By and by,  
In the sweetest of leisure indeed, you and I  
Will thus tarry untroubled, unhurried, together,  
And paradise find in this marvellous weather.  
To-morrow I leave for the Saguenay, — far  
Down the river, and up where the solitudes are.  
I have made Montmorenci a visit to-day  
For the last, and shall list to the exquisite play  
Of its murmurous music no more, lest I listen  
In dreams. Where its waters gleam ever and glisten,  
Like showers of pearls in the sun, I have laid  
Half the day full of dreamy delight. The cascade  
Partly faces the town; but a leisure hour’s ride  
Down the river’s left bank, yet unseen from the side,  
You approach it. In front, between it and the stream  
It is leaping to meet, is the vision supreme  
Of its beauty. A green, grassy point there invites you  
To linger and gaze, and with gazing delights you;  
For yonder the play of the waters is sweet  
As the sunlight that silvers the foam at your feet;  
Their loud thunder has lost all its resonant ring,  
And in murmurs *Æolian* softly they sing  
Through the distance between; like white gossamer lace  
They droop down the precipitous deep, with the grace  
Of a bridal veil gleaming with gems. You could linger  
In rapt fascination forever, the finger  
Of silence laid soft on your lips, that you might  
Ne’er attempt the expression in words of delight  
Inexpressible.

“Yonder, with beautiful smile,  
The St. Lawrence sweeps onward, and kisses the Isle  
Of Orleans like a lover, and fondly embraces it;  
Turn half around from the falls, and one faces it,—  
River of silver and island of green,  
A pure emerald set in a circlet of sheen,  
A fair picture of peace as man ever has seen.  
On the opposite side are the cottages low  
Of the poor *habitans*, an irregular row,  
Running nigh to the dim water-line; far beyond,  
In the yet dimmer distance, the sky bending fond  
To caress them, the mountain-tops blend with the blue,  
And your vision has bounded the reach of the view.  
Turn again to the right and the west, and you gaze  
On the slumbering city, its roofs all ablaze



In the sunshine, and flooding its soberer grays  
 With a tropical glory ; its batteries, grim  
 And defiant as hate, become mellow and dim  
 In the distance ; its rugged and angular steeps  
 Sloping gently and soft to the river that sleeps  
 At their base ; and above, the red cross of St. George  
 From the citadel flung.

“ I have sat by the gorge  
 Which the point overlooks, so enraptured and charmed  
 By the scene, that my driver no doubt was alarmed  
 For his fare, apprehensive that I would attempt  
 To slip off as a suicide, going exempt  
 From the fees common visitors pay. As I stayed  
 There to-day, and the fall sweeter melodies played  
 In farewell, I wrote thus of

### THE SUNNY CASCADE.

Fair Montmorenci gleaming goes  
 Adown its dim defiles :  
 In nooks no human vision knows,  
 Its tricky current laughing flows,  
 Flash out its silver smiles.

Far up amid dim mountain dells,  
 It drinks from crystal springs :  
 Of cooling rills and mountain wells  
 It gayly sips, and gladly tells,  
 As free it leaps and sings.

It lingers long in quiet grotts  
 Where bending birches weep :  
 Where bloom the blue forget-me-nots  
 Along the warm and sunny spots,  
 It sings itself to sleep.

It wakes to laugh at foaming rift,  
And flies with merry glee  
Adown the swirling rapid swift.  
Where mossy walls in wonder lift  
Their whitening heads to see.

It sinks to rest by pleasant shades  
Where meadow-reaches run,  
Or gleams coquettish through the glades  
Where long it mirrored dusky maids  
Who dusky warriors won.

And rousing soon to rougher ways,  
It sports through rocky fen,  
Where bright the sunlight streams and plays  
Within the lonely woodland maze,  
And longs for haunts of men.

Then down the wider steep it flies  
With eager, hastening feet,  
And sweet complaint for smiling skies,  
To leap with laughter and surprise,  
And glad its wooer greet.

Serene the broad St. Lawrence flows,  
Yet winning with its smiles;  
And Montmorenci gleaming goes  
In joy to wed its sweet repose  
Where bliss alone beguiles.

Forever down its dizzy height  
The cascade sunny leaps,  
Its waters robed in angel white,  
Its song an anthem of delight  
From heaven's own azure deeps.

Its pearly spray, to diamonds kissed,  
Plays truant with the breeze;  
And on it borne as lightest mist,  
In flush of gold and amethyst,  
It seeks the sunset seas.

The fleecy foam in beauty falls  
To hide the bare abyss;  
From out its dripping cavern-halls  
A witching Undine laughing calls  
To win her lover's kiss.

And ever on in sportive race  
Fair Montmorenci runs;  
Forever changing all the grace  
That wimples on its smiling face,  
Yet changeless as the sun's.

"I must bid you adieu till each other we see,  
When my roving vacation has gone, *vis-à-vis*."  
And he signed himself brief, in a style that was meant  
To seem loving as ever,

"Your

"PERCIVAL TRENT."





## XX.



AJOR MELLEN had business or pleasure again,  
Or it may have been both, down at  
Rivermet, when  
He returned from his summer's diversion. He made  
A long call upon Geraldine Hope, and  
he played

In the cruelest way with her peace. She acquitted  
Him, true, of deliberate wish that admitted  
Such torture to her: she could scarce have believed  
That with purpose prepense he would idly have grieved  
Her as now. She accepted the pain that he gave  
With a patient acceptance, submissive, and brave.  
And withal she was glad that he came; for he brought  
A great blessing of comfort at first; and it caught  
Her up, willing and weak, in the shock of its flow,  
Overcoming her quite.

“I can never forego  
Paying tribute to friendship as pleasant as yours,”  
He remarked, “and the business is kind that insures  
Opportunity easy. I’m barely returned  
From the River St. Lawrence, all blistered and burned  
By the sun, as you see. We have had a month’s leisuring,  
Filled running over with vagabond pleasuring,

Sandwiched with some of gay fashion's formalities,  
Spiced with a few of flirtation's dualities.  
Jolliest company, too, that I ever  
Was out with, and rather uncommonly clever."

"You must have been fortunate, major," she said  
As he paused, though she felt that the color had fled  
From her face.

"Well, I was: it's my normal condition,  
You know," and he laughed, as if every ambition  
He knew had been gratified. "When a man chooses  
To waste a few weeks doing nothing, he loses  
His temper as well as his time, if the rest  
Who should aid him in laudable ways are possessed  
Of the devils of social discomfort. They tear  
Very many, Miss Hope, I am willing to swear  
On the word of a man who has studied them well:  
They are devils of which there's no record to tell  
Out of whom or of what they were cast. It may be  
They went down with the swine to their bath in the sea,  
And escaped—with their piggish propensities, grunting  
At every experience, always affronting  
Your pleasure and patience. There can't be a place  
That is better for lifting the mask from the face  
Of a character rude than half-roughing it where  
The good-humor and fun are a part of the fare.  
There were none in our set with whom grumbling was chronic;  
No one of us bored all the rest with Byronic  
Quotations and sentiments; nobody flung  
A wet blanket of sneers from the loom of his tongue  
Till he chilled the whole company; all were discreet  
And good-natured, forbearing and wise, as is meet  
For a party of idlers like ours. Even I  
In deportment, I fancy, was rated as high

As the others — unless it were Trent.”

As he named  
Her belovèd, it seemed he had purposely aimed  
A keen arrow to enter her bosom. She gasped  
As if panting for air, and convulsively clasped  
Her hands close in unheeded beseeching.

“He carried  
The honors off easy — or would had he tarried  
As long as the rest. Your good fellows who sing,  
And who play, and make speeches, and do everything  
As if that were their *forte*, have the best of us noodles  
Who count with the ladies about as their poodles, —  
Poor curs, our one talent the meek one of following,  
Led by a string. When I see women swallowing  
Music like Trent’s, with their hearts in their faces,  
As ready to yield him their love and embraces  
As even to listen and praise, I am vexed  
That with dower so meagre I ever was sexed  
With the males. It’s discouraging, isn’t it?”

Waiting

No answer, not stayed by the half-hesitating  
Appeal that spoke out of her face, he asserted :  
“If ever coquettes have outrageously flirted  
With men, it is men of his fortunate class.  
The less charming ones they are content to let pass  
In the main, as not worthy their wickedest wiles,  
And we get what I call their superfluous smiles.  
We are lucky, perhaps, after all, in not knowing  
The sharpest effects of their skill, and in going  
Unscathed when the cleverer fellows are showing  
Sore injury.”

White to her lips, and in tones  
That were trembling, and swift might have sunk into moans,  
She besought revelation of mystery hinted

At thus in his words.

“‘The Palladium’ printed

A paragraph, saying your friends had been drowned.”

“So I’ve heard. They were caught in a storm, and we found  
Their boat empty and broken the following day,  
After searching for hours. The quick journalist’s way  
Was to telegraph promptly their death. When they came  
Back alive, as they did, they were rather to blame  
For denying a fact: so the newspaper said  
Nothing of it, and silently left them for dead.”

The hard ring of his sentence sarcastic was much  
Like a dash of cool water when fainting: its touch  
Gave her strength. Yet her heart appeared swelling to burst,  
And her lips were as dry as if parching with thirst;  
And a great dizziness overcame her so nearly,  
She whispered a prayer.

“Percy Trent’s case was clearly  
A desperate one after that. So romantic  
Conditions must plunge a man in the Atlantic  
Of love beyond rescue. He fled from his fate  
Like the coward all men are with flirts. I should hate  
To be hit in the heart as he’s been; for these poets  
Take hard any hurt of that kind, though I know it’s  
Quick over with often. He’ll write better verse  
After this; and his life will not be any worse  
For the blow she has dealt him.”

“You think Mrs. Lee  
Is unmerciful then?”

“Yes. I know her to be  
A coquette of the wickedest, once she attempts  
Any conquest in earnest. She kindly exempts  
From her efforts all average men, for they sicken

Her soon; but a man of some genius can quicken  
 The strongest allurements within her. She gives  
 Herself cheerfully over to winning him; lives  
 In the pleasure she finds in her growing success;  
 Leads him on in the quietest fashion, with less



Of apparent desire than indifference; wins  
 All his worship, and — stabs him.”

“And wickedly sins  
 Against womanhood,” warmly she answered him, throbbing  
 Her heart through her speech. “There can never be robbing  
 More wanton than takes of the treasure of life  
 For the taking, then presses keen Cruelty’s knife  
 To the vitals, and leaves it.”

“The stab never reaches  
 So deep as that quite, and the victim beseeches

A cure from some sister of mercy. The curate  
Her ministry finishes. All must endure it,—  
The wound and the treatment, I mean.” And he sneered  
In his cynical fashion.

She trembled, and feared  
To reply.

“As for Trent,” he continued, sarcastic  
Yet earnest, “his love, I believe, is elastic  
Enough to rebound from the bitterest strain.  
He will weaken awhile with the shock and the pain;  
But in time he will marry that sister of mercy,  
Who never may dream that the poems her Percy  
Produces hereafter take color and tone  
From a love that was earlier born than her own.  
It’s the way of the world. When with kisses we wed,  
We have stood by the grave of some passion, and shed  
The hot tears of forgetting.”

“You speak for the men,  
It may be;” and she rallied indignantly then.  
“Men may love and forget: women love till they die.”

“Then they stand at the altar, I fear, with a lie  
On their lips many times,” he responded. “The chances  
Don’t favor fulfilment of early romances.  
We’re creatures of fate, or of hard circumstances  
That govern us, come between us and the kindest  
Conditions of being, and lead in the blindest  
Of paths. Women do with their love as they must;  
And the truest of faith, the sublimest of trust,  
Cannot yield the full fruitage of love absolutely  
And ever. A woman may love when she mutely  
Must look her farewell. If she never forgets,  
She pays penalty twice, in her love and regrets,  
For the sex that compels her to silence. She ought



To have recompense rare for a fact that is fraught  
With unfairness the greatest,—the fact that avers  
A man's freedom of speech, and then robs her of hers.  
But suppose she were granted like freedom of voice,  
It might chance that she make an unfortunate choice,  
And win only refusal, and go'disappointed  
Away, as the men do, you know. It's disjointed  
And cruel and wrong, if the woman must cling  
To her love when it comes to be only a sting  
And a weariness to her."

He spoke with a ban  
On his flippant expression, that frequently ran  
To severity reckless. If ever sincere  
And believing, he seemed to be now.

"You appear  
Full of sympathy, major, for women who fail  
To find sweetness in loving," she said; and her pale  
Cheeks were glowing with color returned. "You would make  
Of their love but a fancy short-lived, for the sake  
Of in charity sparing them pain. You contend  
That love blooms like an annual, ready to lend  
Of its fragrance to him who will water it well  
When its winter of grief has gone by. You compel  
A belief that we love as we like, and our fancies  
Are cherished or dropped as the fortunate chances  
Of being direct. But I cannot accept  
Such a theory. Granted that women have wept  
Bitter tears, and then wiped them away, and then carried  
A smile for their friends,—even say that they married,  
And grew into matrons with faces like saints  
For the happy light in them, and made no complaints  
Of the past,—I believe they remembered, and knew  
That they never could wholly forget, and were true  
To the law of their natures. God made us to love;

And we love for a purpose beyond and above  
The mere loving. Some discipline comes to us, up  
From the dregs that are found in the bitterest cup,  
That we never should learn, did we drink and forget."

She was smiling, with tears in her eyes, that she let  
Slip away unawares down her beautiful cheeks,  
And the major observed them.

"Who foolishly seeks  
To convince any woman," he said, "must repent  
And be silent, or soon be convinced. I'm content  
To admit you the argument, since you appeal  
To economics only your faith can reveal,  
And my questioning doubts. Divine purposes blind  
Me wherever I turn. Where they seem to you kind,  
They appear to me cruel. One loves and is glad,  
And another goes out from her paradise sad,  
And in sorrow she ought to forget; and you say  
She must always remember, for this is the way  
That her Maker has ordered. He brings her, you think,  
A deep draught the most bitter, and bids her to drink;  
And she never may sweet enough happily sip  
To remove the bad taste that is left on her lip.  
It is better to drink and forget, as men do  
Who sip kisses of comfort, devotedly woo  
Where 'tis easy to win, and make matches at last  
For the happy-faced matrons who cling to their past  
Without evident grieving."

His words had the ring  
Of fine irony in them.

"Some bitter draughts bring  
Their own subsequent sweetness," she answered. "The taste  
May grow pleasanter to us, though never effaced:  
It may lose all its bitterness even, and leave

Little more than the kiss of a friend. We may grieve,  
And be glad even while we remember ; for God  
Will be kind, I am sure, and will spare us the rod  
Of a wretched remembrance when once we have learned  
What his wisdom would teach. He has tenderly turned  
Many Marahs to wells of refreshing and strength.  
I believe every heart can find gladness at length  
In the faith that all lessons of God are as good  
As the Master himself."

"And no reasoning could  
Be so strong as your faith," he replied. "I should know  
It were idle to challenge that. Since I must go  
Very soon, I'll admit I am vanquished."

He laughed

In his easy and spirited way, and with craft  
And with cunning address he diverted their speech  
Into other relations ; yet often the reach  
Of his cynical comment was cruel and keen,  
As with utterance sharp it went flashing between  
A half-credence and ready denial. He spared  
Nothing reverent now from allusion that dared  
To be lightly irreverent, measured and mocked  
The pretences of creed and profession, and talked  
Like the doubter he was.

Many heard him, and felt  
A quick shrinking and pain from the blows that he dealt  
Without mercy wherever he went ; but the most  
Only laughed at his wit and the half-hidden boast  
In his words of a wise unbelief, and took pleasure  
In hearing him. Gifted with insight to measure  
The feelings that shyly kept silence, he sounded  
The shallows of conscience and motive, and bounded  
The average purpose with ready precision,  
Then singled them out for sarcastic derision,

And sneered at their shame.

When at length he had ended  
His call, and, with delicate lightness intended  
To soften his previous words, he had said  
An adieu, the mixed feelings of Geraldine led  
To as mingled expression. She wept, and she smiled  
Amid weeping. She uttered her thanks, like a child  
In return for a token surprising, to Him  
Who had spared her belovèd. With eyes growing dim,  
And with language that faltered, she prayed him to keep  
Her belovèd as hers, that none other might creep  
In between her warm heart and his own, that their ways  
Might be never divided. She prayed, as he prays  
For his soul who is losing it, pleading, with pain,  
That she never might know the wild longing and vain  
Of a love unrequited. She whispered the name  
Of her lover in tenderness sweet (though it came  
Through her tears) in the confidence always she gave  
To her Lord, and besought him in mercy to save  
Them from drifting apart. Yet her heart by and by,  
In the midst of her need and her longing, could cry,  
“Let it be as thou wilt, loving Father; for mine  
Is the weakness of love, but the wisdom is thine.”



## XXI.



IN the late summer's glory that softly  
suffused

All the world, Percy Trent idly, dream-  
ily cruised

Down the River St. Lawrence. The  
wonderful sweep

Of its waters grew wider and grander.  
The sleep

Of the sunlight upon them, unstirred by a dream  
Of wild passion, was sweetly unbroken. Supreme  
In majestic beauty the river rolled far,  
Through a land where the deepest of solitudes are,  
On its widening course to the sea. In the mood  
Of its marvellous peace, that serenely did brood  
O'er the scene, he went sailing away to content.

When the afternoon lengthened, and day was far spent,  
They caught sight of Cocouna, where wealthy Canadians  
Saunter in summer like happy Arcadians.

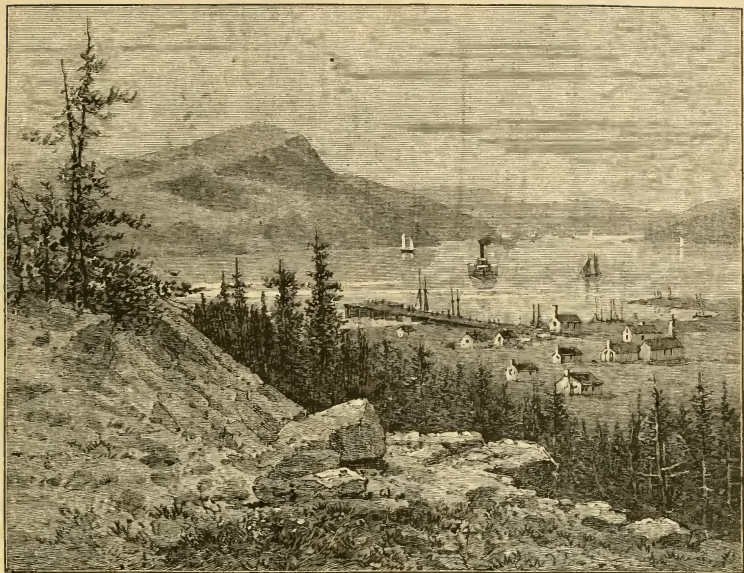
Trim and white-visaged, it sat on the shore,  
Miles remote from the steamer that steadily bore  
For the Saguenay's mouth, far across; and it seemed  
Like a city set low in the sky, as it gleamed  
On the crystal horizon,—a city of cloud,  
Far away from the din and the fret of the crowd,  
In some country of silence.

## At Tadousac's wharf

They made landing, and tarried to look at its dwarf  
Of a church, and the relics of centuries dead.  
Pretty Tadousac out of its stillness has said  
Not a word for the foreigner's hearing. It hides  
In its modesty shy where the Saguenay's tides  
Pour their inkiness into the mightier flow  
Of St. Lawrence; and none of its quiet can know,  
And the charm of its solitude strange, till they stand  
On the beautiful beach, where its delicate sand  
Ever tempts the most delicate feet to a bath,  
Or go straying alone by some vine-hidden path  
To the bluffs overlooking the river and bay.  
In the dark of the waters, white porpoises play,  
And make merrily bright the tranquillity there;  
But no music of birds is borne out on the air,  
And no whirring of spindles, no clangor of steel,  
And no screaming of whistles, make frequent appeal  
To your sense of activity. Languor and rest  
Are as opiates here; and the common behest  
To a laborer's brain and his wearying heart,  
To arise, and in duty and doing take part,  
Is a whisper unheard, where the speech of the time  
Is in whispers, with rest for its rhythm and its rhyme.

In the deeper and mellower hush of the night,  
Amid shadows that shut the wide world out of sight,  
They went sailing northwest. The next morning at seven  
The Bay of Sweet Laughter, that looks up to heaven  
Untroubled and glad,—sunny Ha-Ha,—gave greeting  
With smiles of surprise. As the morning sped, fleeting  
As mornings of pleasure and peace ever seem,  
The sharp bow of the steamer was set down the stream,  
And they sailed with the tide through the silence. A shell





Of pure pearl was the sky overhead, and it fell  
 In its purity silvern and white to the hills  
 On the left and the right. If the Lord ever stills  
 A fierce tempest of feeling run high in the breast,  
 With the might of his word to an infinite rest,  
 It is here. If the silence of God ever falls  
 In its tenderness down on the world from the walls  
 Of the City of Gold, they have known it who sailed  
 Through the Saguenay's stillness.

No mariner hailed  
 Their approach, and no fisherman shouted his word  
 Of salute. The soft calm of the air never stirred  
 To harsh utterance here, or the wing of a bird  
 Flying wearily home to his nest-keeping mate.  
 From the bold, rocky heights that were grim, desolate,

And untenanted, bounding the river's deep black  
From the sunny Ha-Ha to the quaint Tadousac,  
Never came to their ears or their vision a sound  
Or a signal the solitude deep and profound  
To disturb.

Cape Eternity, grandly uprearing  
Its dome to the azure, invited their nearing,  
And thrilled them with awe of its might so tremendous.  
Cape Trinity, opposite, lifted stupendous  
And mighty its masses of granite to greet  
The sublimity facing it. Majesties meet  
In no kinglier fashion than these, as they tower  
Far into the deep of the blue in their power  
Titanic, from out the deep blackness below ;  
And no gloomier depths in their sombreness flow  
To the sea than the deeps of these desolate capes,  
That in silent solemnity cover their shapes  
Half the altitude marvellous. Sailing beside  
Their huge granite upheavals, the pomp and the pride  
Of humanity fade to forgetting, in awe  
Of the Infinite Presence that never man saw  
But on mountains majestic and lonely. The lift  
Of their faces is Godward ; and sudden and swift  
Is the leap of our thought from each adamant crown  
To the Spirit eternal that loving bends down  
With a glad benediction forever.

Too soon

Came the close of that sheeny and bright afternoon  
As they sailed down the river of silence. The sweetest  
And gladdest of days is forever the fleetest :  
It slips into yesterday's arms, and we say  
A good-night to its pleasure and peace in the gray  
Of a twilight that will not forbear. If it take  
Of our heart's-ease, and cruelly leave but the ache

Of disquietude, hunger, and longing, what need  
That we wonder and grieve? They are blessed indeed  
Who their faces have steadily set from the past,  
And who will not look back.

The next morn they made fast  
To the wharf at Quebec, and Trent hastened by rail  
To the hills of New Hampshire. A summer day's sail  
Has its charm for the soul in disquiet; the ills  
Of unrest are forgot in the calm of the hills  
Everlasting. Who walks where their grandeur uprears  
Should be glad with a hallowing gladness that cheers  
Like a word of the Lord never lost. In the strength  
Of their masterful quiet and glory, at length  
He should stand as do they, with their face to the throne  
Of their Maker, in patience, and wait.

As alone  
Though the mountains he wandered uplifted, his soul  
Catching glimpses beyond of the land of its goal,  
He was near to content. He could muse, in a mood  
Of serene exaltation, on passion that wooed  
Him astray from the pathway of duty, nor shrink  
From the wearisome way he must journey, nor think  
Bitter things of himself. In this mood he could lie  
On the sunniest slope, see the fleets of the sky  
In their fleecy white silence float dreamily by,  
See the thistledown drifting at peace on the air,  
Hear the tinkle of bells far below him, and care  
For no morrow of possible pain.

Yet aware  
Of the days that awaited, nor happily blind  
To their certain unrest, though now calmly resigned  
In a willingness patient, he stayed to behold  
The glad summer in garments of scarlet and gold  
Proudly decking herself in the early September,

While sweetly she tarried in dreams to remember.  
Ere leaving, the mountain-top highest he climbed,  
And with vivid and sorrowful prophecy rhymed,  
Out of vision unclouded, and quieted fears,  
And pathetic concern, of

### THE VALLEY OF TEARS.

If I climb to the mountains of gladness,  
And bask in the sunshine of bliss,  
If unheeding all sorrow and sadness,  
Forgetting the good that I miss,  
I look out from my uplands of being  
Across the broad reach of the years,  
I grow tenderly sober at seeing  
The shadowy Valley of Tears.

It is never quite lost to my vision,  
Though often beyond it I see  
The green slopes of the summits elysian  
That wait with their blessing for me;  
And, though often I long for the freedom  
That yonder eternally reigns,  
I remember that each has his Edom  
Before the glad Canaan he gains.

When my heart with tumultuous throbbing  
Takes up the sad burdens of men,  
I go down amid sighing and sobbing,  
And walk the dim valley again:  
A sober, sepulchral procession  
We make as we journey along,  
With a grief for our only possession,  
A funeral dirge for our song.

There are willows above us low bending,  
That weep with us over our woe;  
And the mist of the mountains, descending,  
Bedews all the way as we go.  
In the dark of our dubious grieving  
We walk as if stars had gone out,  
And our souls were grown sick of believing  
The morrow were more than a doubt.

There are hearts, with their hunger pathetic,  
That walk in the Valley of Tears;  
There are souls, in their sadness ascetic,  
That linger and grieve through the years;  
There are loves that come silently hither  
To seek for some treasure of cost,  
And that mourn, as a bairn for its mither,  
The wonderful love that is lost.

There are many who wait and who wander  
Within the dim valley with me,  
And who yearn for the mountain-tops yonder,  
The sunlight and gladness to see;  
But a stranger I look in their faces,  
And strangers they look into mine;  
And as strangers we grope for the places  
Where sunlight and gladness may shine.

For who walks in the valley so lonely  
Goes there in his sorrow alone;  
And who gives friendly greeting gives only  
For bread to the hungry a stone.  
They may touch us whose yesterdays tender  
Made loving and living supreme;  
But our grieving refuses surrender,  
And friendship was only a dream.

I am far up the mountains of being :  
The mists of the morning below  
In their beauty shut out from my seeing  
The valley where soon I must go ;  
But I know, though the sun of my hoping  
May shine with a gladness that cheers,  
That I soon shall be wearily groping  
My way in the Valley of Tears.

You may smile on the summits of gladness  
Who never have wept at their base ;  
But in time with the garment of sadness  
You closely will cover your face ;  
And unknown of the many who wander,  
Unknowing as they are unknown,  
You shall grope for the radiance yonder  
Across the dark valley alone.

Amid pitiful sobbing and sighing  
Where willows and cypresses bend,  
You shall walk where the shadows are lying,  
And see not a sign of the end :  
You shall know, by the twilight unbroken  
When morn on the mountain appears,  
You have come, without warning or token,  
At length to the Valley of Tears.





## XXII.



WHEN she read the long letter of Percival Trent,  
 Loving Geraldine Hope of her tenderness lent  
 To its words, and they gladdened her.  
 Still he was hers  
 In possession the truest. No doubt  
 ever stirs  
 The fond heart to keen throbbings of  
 pain, but is stilled

By repeated assurance of love. Never thrilled  
 Any love with the pang of distrust, but could glow  
 With the gladness of faith come again, like the flow  
 Of a tide that has ebbcd.

But a striking omission  
 She saw by and by, that began to condition  
 Her happiness new. Not a word had he penned  
 Of his late episode: from beginning to end  
 There was not an allusion, in fact, to his friend  
 Mrs. Lee. It was plain that he could not have known  
 Of the published report of their death that had flown  
 With such cruelty to her; more bitterly certain  
 It seemed that his silence had drawn a thick curtain  
 Between her and part of his past. She resented  
 His action at first, and then swiftly repented  
 The feeling she had not expressed; for he knew  
 What was best for them both, and in kindness he drew

Any veil that might hide her from seeing. Till he  
Should the curtain uplift, she would reverent be,  
Nor profane it with curious touch. She could wait,  
In the patience of prodigal love, for the late  
Revelation that love would compel. If it never  
Were made, if by strange providence she must ever  
Relinquish the love that could make it, perchance  
In a clearer to-morrow the dark circumstance  
Would light up into blessing. God knew.

If she came

In the trust of her faith to a pitiful blame  
Of her love, to a fear that so worthful and sweet  
An incoming as this in her life were not meet  
For the Master's approval, or, tearful, to ask  
If he chose to place on her the pain-giving task  
Of upyielding it, could she obedient lay  
The dear sacrifice on the Lord's altar, and say,  
"I have given thee, Lord, all the sweetest and best  
That is mine"?—if the loss of her love, as a test  
Of her love for the Master, came to her at length,  
And she struggled and doubted and wept till the strength  
Of her faith overpowered her heart,—be not swift  
To assert that she lacked the great womanly gift  
Of deep loving; and wait till all women you learn,  
Ere you doubt if the heart of a woman can turn,  
When the weakness and longing of love make it falter,  
And give of its riches unsparred on the altar  
Of God.

There are heroines kneeling alone  
In their Holy of holies, or sitting unknown  
Where the multitudes worship, whose offerings, made  
In the silence of faith seldom doubting, have paid  
Dearer tribute than incense of patriarchs. Laid,  
With the lingering touches of womanhood tender,

In tearful but cheerful and hallowed surrender  
Before the veiled face of their Lord as he waited,  
Such offerings precious and costly were fated  
To pleasure him better than blood, and to win  
Recognition as precious. They only begin  
To approximate love, who in selfishness sin  
By withholding its wonderful treasure and sweetness,  
And hindering so the perfected completeness  
Of full consecration.

And Geraldine felt

All the deepest assertion of love when she knelt  
And said, "Lord, if this thing that to me is so dear  
Has been wrong in thy sight, let me hallow it here  
With my tears of upgiving, and yield it to thee  
To do with as thou wilt." She could generous be  
With the Master, not doling him meagrely out  
Of her poverty's wicked withholding and doubt,  
But as lavishly yielding her riches, and knowing  
The best she could give must be beggarly showing  
To God, the one Giver of all. Though she gave  
With a liberal heart, that was noble and brave,  
She well knew that the end was not won in her giving;  
That sacrifice sweetest to God is a living  
Obedience daily, when truly obeying  
Is harder than praise, and more costly than praying.  
She knew, if the Lord should her offering take,  
She must make it complete through the lingering ache  
Of her heart in the wearying days to be met;  
That the Lord could not mean her to drink and forget,  
If he gave her the cup.

She was human; she rose

To no saint-nature, clad in angelic repose,  
In this crisis of faith: and how strongly she kept  
Her humanity weak could be seen as she wept

For the love she might lose. In the time intervening  
Ere Percival Trent came again, the full meaning  
Of painful expectancy blossomed, and bore  
Bitter fruit in her life. Now, as never before,  
She was wearied and troubled of soul. For the rest  
Of content she could sobbingly pray; but its blest  
Benediction should come as the Master bestowed.  
Though she longed for the peace like a river that flowed,  
She but caught an occasional draught from its brink,



As her thirsty soul pined, even panted, to drink  
To its measureless blessing.

When Trent came at last,  
From her wearisome doubting and fearing she passed  
To a loving acceptance of good in to-day.

She made glad, in her simple and beautiful way,  
His return to her love. He was hers once again,—  
The one prince of her heart mid the nobles of men.  
She would trust till he told her to doubt; she would show  
How she trusted and loved till he made her to know  
He must fail of requital. Perchance, if he cared  
For another, her love, if it maidenly dared  
To give new revelation of being, would lure  
Him away from his fancy to faithfulness sure.  
Could the Father forbid an endeavor so pure,  
And deny it success? Could the semblance of sin  
Be in any beguiling made only to win  
And to keep what she felt to be hers? Worthy winning  
It was; and the Father such dutiful sinning  
Would quickly forgive.

Do you wonder that Trent

For a time could believe the strong passion was spent  
He had wrestled with so? He had come from the hills,  
With their peace fresh upon him, their masterful wills  
Overmastering feverish impulse. He came  
Full of purposes faithful, and penitent shame  
Of his former unfaith, to be loyal and true;  
And he stood by her side, undeserving, he knew,  
With no wish beyond happiness present, believing,  
In blind, willing credence, that folly's brief grieving  
Was ended. She helped his belief with her sweet  
Declarations unsyllabled. Passion's defeat,  
With the aid that she brought him, so timely and tender,  
Yet strong, was complete, or so seemed. Its surrender  
He smiled at in strength over-rated.

They talked

In the language of lovers; as lovers they walked  
Where the waters run seaward by Rivermet's side,  
To behold the tall maples in radiance dyed

Like the robes of a queen; and, if peace were denied  
In superlative measure, these twain, who received  
Of its blessing more moderate, fondly believed  
It enough.

When some good we have craved appears less  
Than will meet our desire, we are prone to possess  
The full bounty in easy imaginings, cheating  
Ourselves that we may not be cheated, repeating  
The pretty delusion, and letting it seem  
To be fact: so we make of our moments supreme  
A half-fiction, the truth very deftly disguising  
That great expectation may be most surprising  
In lack of fulfilment. Poor dolts that we are  
Thus to carry our covetous folly so far!





### XXIII.



N November, Trent lectured at L——.

Mrs. Lee

Was again the one hearer responsive  
to see,

Of all present, in scanning the crowd  
at the Hall.

He was moved by the current mag-  
netic, and all

The quick feeling begot by a look in her face.

They who listened were stirred by the magical grace

Of his speech, as he never had stirred them before.

In the musical ring of his words there was more

Of a sympathy deep than he knew, or than those

Whom it thrilled could define or describe.

At the close

Of his lecture she came to him, — came as the rest,

Who with greeting and compliment's flattery pressed

To his side; and they met in the casual way

Of a common acquaintance, with courteous play

Of inquiry and answer. The major took part

In their meeting, and studied them both with the art

He had mastered so well; but no secret he read

Of their innermost holding. Their manner but said

They were friends without interest deeper.

They went

From the Hall as together they gossiped; and Trent

In her company supped, with the major. If either  
Was thrilled by the strongest remembrances, neither  
Gave sign. Conversation was easy, and ranged  
From the grave to the gay at its will. They exchanged  
Merry trifles of wit in the merriest fashion;  
And none could have guessed that a powerful passion  
Hid under such trivial speech and composure  
So perfect. In vain for some look of disclosure,  
Some word of deep meaning, the major made scrutiny  
Keenest. Swift passion was dead, or its mutiny  
Conquered by resolute will.

And yet, leaving  
To seek his hotel, in a partial deceiving  
Of self as to feeling aroused, and believing  
Too much in his strength to make safe his belief in it,  
Percival Trent was unhappy. The grief in it,  
Subtle, deep-seated, and dimly defined  
As a grief, with a robbery keenly unkind,  
Took away from his evening's endeavor the glad  
Sense of triumph. He walked the still streets with a sad  
Recognition slow forcing itself on his soul,  
That the glamour of public approval is dole  
But the poorest for peace of the heart.

The next morning,  
Regardless of silent yet forcible warning  
Against it, he called on his friend; and she met him  
With charming serenity graceful that set him  
To wondering. Could it be she whom he heard,  
When her feeling had swift every syllable stirred  
With deep fervor, confessing a love too supreme  
For denial, or silence, or death? Did he dream  
She had lain on his breast, with her heart to his own,  
In a bliss of possession too sensitive grown  
To be painless? Was this the same woman who spoke

Of her wilderness barren and lonely, and woke  
His quick passion's response? Was her winning repose  
Like a calm of the tropics deceptive, that glows  
With the heat underneath it to hurricane wild?

She received him with beautiful grace, that beguiled  
Him anew. The warm grasp of her lingering hand  
Within his, like a breath upon dark embers, fanned  
His swift feeling to flame; but he struggled to hold  
As serene a demeanor as hers, and controlled  
Himself well. Without blushes, or faintest betraying  
Of passionate force that was meetly delaying  
Assertion, she talked like a woman long wed  
With content, far removed from the girl who has said  
Her first loving confessional. Part of the harm  
She might do to a heart was hid under the charm  
So elusive, that spoke of conditions beyond  
Idle feminine art, or superfluous fond  
Demonstration.

His lecture she praised with a keen  
Apprehension of meanings and truths; and between  
Her sweet flatteries gave with a friendly temerity  
Critical words that declared her sincerity,  
Making the light of her praise appear strong  
By the shade of her delicate frankness. As long  
As it pleased her, they talked of the commoner things  
Of experience, shunning the sensitive springs  
That can open the heart; or discoursed of the newest  
Attemptings in prose and in verse, and the truest  
Successes of those who had won. She appealed  
To the poesy in him expression to yield  
With the power and art he might master, and give  
Out of gifts that were his a few poems to live,  
And win laurels undying.

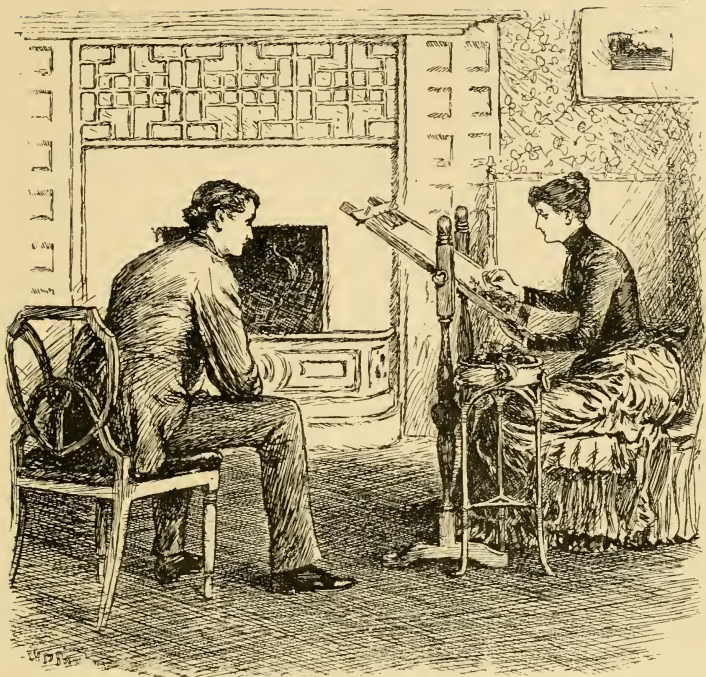
“I honor the gifts

Of the poet,” he said; “and my pen never lifts  
To make rhythmic endeavor, but keenly it longs  
For the genius to prove it a singer of songs  
That may gladden the future. The cruelest dower  
Men have, I believe, is the semblance of power  
They know to be weakness. We narrowly miss  
A great good, and forever we fancy that this  
Is the sum of our cruel defrauding. I hear  
Now and then the sweet accents of Poesy clear,  
And I strive to repeat them; but swiftly they fade  
Out of memory. Silence her finger has laid  
On my lips; and I feel, through the pain that has come  
To my soul, it were happier far to be dumb.”

“But the singers to whom the world listens must feel  
The same bitterness often. They rarely reveal  
The full music that thrills them: they breathe a few notes,  
And the rest never hallow their fortunate throats  
For our blessing. Moreover, no true singer’s art  
Was born in him whole statured. He learns of his heart,  
And he sings as he learns. He must grow to the measure  
Of full-singing strength in a studious leisure  
Improved by the lessons of pain. You can turn  
To the poet’s best pages at will, and there learn  
How he grew to his manhood poetic by reading  
Between his own lines; for his silence makes pleading  
Of sympathy. Do not you feel he has striven  
To teach you in song what to him has been given  
In cryings for utterance?”

Looking with furtive,

Quick glance in her face, he beheld the assertive  
Appeal that so haunted it often, swift showing  
Itself through her smile. With his blood quicker flowing,



Yet calmly, he spoke, —

“I suspect that you read  
 With a vision much deeper than mine; that I need  
 My poetic first lessons to learn now of you:  
 For no singer is heard without sympathy true,  
 And deep insight to see what are mysteries hidden  
 From all but the few. I believe you were bidden  
 To sing, and are wickedly silent. For me  
 There is only an echo of song: there can be  
 No outringing of marvellous notes that are mine  
 As I catch them direct from the singer divine  
 To whom poets all listen. And yet a refrain  
 May be tenderly sung till it softens the pain



In some sorrowing heart, and uplifts it. I'd ask  
For no mission diviner, no holier task,  
Were I laureate crowned for the world, than to sing  
Of its sunshine, and on my strong melody bring  
It forth out of the dark."

"By and by you will print  
The best songs you have sung, and will give us a hint  
Of the sweeter to come: I believe in your gift  
As diviner indeed than you think. It should lift  
You above the great chorus, who sing out of tune,  
And torment us. You'll give us a tenderer rune  
Than the many could breathe, if they stood at the door  
Of the innermost temple, and listened, before  
They began to make echoes of song. It will know  
Sweeter cadence and mellower grace for the flow  
Of last summer's experience into your being.  
Some deeps of clear vision have come to your seeing,  
You needed, for charity's sake and for love's,  
To behold."

"I remember, my friend, that the dove's  
Divine errand came after the storm. But, if sent  
When the floods of this passion so idle are spent,  
Will the dear dove of song, flying over the waste  
Of my life, come again in her comforting haste,  
Bringing olive-leaves?"

She with her sudden allusion  
Unmanned him; and he in as sudden confusion  
Responded, he hardly knew how. With the look  
That she gave him, his strong resolution forsook  
Him, and fled. In its hunger pathetic he saw  
The great want that would scorn to derision all law  
Of denial, if free from its bondage of chains.  
And that bondage — what was it?

"For you there remains



Worthy work in the world, and who labors receives  
In due time of his wages. Your dove's olive-leaves  
Will bring promise of happy fulfilment to make  
Your life rich with glad increase. You'll sing for the sake  
Of the multitudes eagerly listening, and find  
Your own gladness in service of song that is kind  
Most of all to yourself. Good Samaritan singers  
Are few, I believe, who divinely are bringers  
Of oil and of wine to the wounded and sore,  
And who fail of a blessing themselves as they pour  
The sweet blessing on others."

She spoke with some feeling,  
Her words growing tenderer still, as appealing  
She looked in his face.

"Could I sing you to peace,  
I would stop by the wayside forever, nor cease  
In my service of song till you bade me," he said  
In his passionate utterance low.

"But instead  
You must sing for the mass," she replied. "I shall listen  
More eager than they. In my heart I shall christen  
As mine all the sweetest and tenderest things  
You may breathe. I shall comforted say, 'Now he sings  
For the neediest one,—for the one in the world  
Who can take the rich treasure of sweetness impearled  
In his notes, and feel gladdest and richest possessing it.'  
Give as you may to the multitude, blessing it  
Freely with giving's extravagant hand,  
I shall count you my singer henceforth, though you stand  
On the highest Parnassus, and I, sitting far  
In the valley below, see you shine like a star."

With a mighty endeavor he mastered the tide  
That was sweeping him on to expression denied,

Yet invited. He rose to depart.

“I shall climb

To no height above yours ; and my tenderest rhyme  
Must forever fall short of the ministry sweet  
I would lend it for you. Never song so complete  
By a poet was sung as my longing desire  
Would make vocal, if only these lips knew the fire  
That is burning my heart. But my lips are as weak  
As the lips of a woman.”

He smiled.

“If, to speak

Of her love, a weak woman — the weakest — might dare  
In the words that were fittest, you'd own that a share  
Of the strength of her heart had been suddenly lent  
To her lips.” And the look that she gave to him sent  
The warm blood to his breast. “And her lips need be strong  
To repress what in utterance could be but wrong.  
Do you doubt it?”

“Their silence is cruel, when speech  
Would be cruelty worse. Let them tenderly teach  
The same silence to mine.” And he kissed her, repenting  
At once the request and her ready assenting.

“Good-by! You will sing for me often,” she urged.

The wild passion he wrestled with rioted, surged,  
Through his heart. With a masterful effort he turned  
To the door.

“When the singer's true art I have learned,  
You may hear me. Good-by!”

He went hastily out

Of her presence, and into a torment of doubt.

## XXIV.



UT a day or two later a brief letter  
came,  
Without prefix of date or appendix of  
name ;  
And as Percival Trent read it, flush-  
ing and eager,  
The forces of passion combined to be-  
leaguer

His soul.

“You have been here,” the letter began :  
“You have come and have gone. If our hearts overran  
The hard limits we set for them, flowing together  
Like parallel rivers in storm-laden weather,  
Are we to be blamed? O my poet! the touch  
Of your lips lingers yet upon mine ; and if much  
Of my feverish longing and pain they reveal,  
You who wooed them to speech must as gently conceal  
Your displeasure. I never can bid you be dumb  
Any more ; for it seems to me now that the sum  
Of my pain is your silence. I long so to hear  
The dear words you ought never to speak, that I fear  
I am foolish, unwomanly grown ; and I crave  
For the freedom to echo those words, as a slave  
Must pine after the freedom forever denied.  
As I see you far over the gulf yawning wide

And unending between us, I reach out my hands  
And I call to you. Fate with its cruel commands  
Would compel me to cease; but I cannot. I cry  
Through the desolate distance, and say, 'By and by  
He will hear me and answer.' You make no reply,  
And my hope like a willow droops downward, and weeps.  
I am learning the infinite pity that sleeps  
In the bosom of God, I so pity myself.  
As I count up the goods that I have, they are pelf  
But the poorest compared with the treasure I covet.  
I see it just out of my reach; and I love it  
So wildly, and long with such longing to hold  
It supremely my own, that my heart, over-bold,  
Would compel the possession at once—if it could.

"O my friend! you who hold by the true and the good  
With so steady a hand, you must come to my need  
With your certain uplifting. I hunger, with greed  
That can brook no denial, for life that is strong  
In the truth, and that steadily sets against wrong  
The unchangeable features of duty. You only  
Can lead me up out of this solitude lonely  
In which now I wait, by temptation beset.  
When I stronger am grown, I may cease to regret,  
And may go, with a face that is calm and determined,  
Along the hard road where they march who are ermined  
Of soul like yourself; but to-day not the weakest  
Of women, among the most timid and meekest,  
Is weaker than I. May Heaven pity me! None  
Are so feebly outstretching their hands to the sun,  
While they sit in the shadows, and shiver. The whole  
Of my being is but a complaint. In my soul  
There are only wild throbbings rebellious, and great  
Sobs of pain, and these loud cryings-out against fate."

He was stirred to the deep of his nature, and wrote  
An impulsive reply:—

“To your passionate note  
My heart beats a response that the flow of my pen  
Can but coldly interpret. I kiss you again,  
That my heart, overrunning my lips, may betray  
To your own, throbbing fervidly under, what they  
Could not fitly reveal, though endowed with the spirit  
Of love pentecostal. They only who hear it,  
Or feel it, know all the sweet emphasis hid  
In love’s tender, unsyllabled speech. If you bid  
Me to breathe out a full revelation, I never  
Can do it in words: I must make the endeavor  
In language with meaning far deeper.

“My friend,  
I can lead you in worthiest way to an end  
That is worthiest, only as steady I face  
My hard duty apart from your side. In the grace  
Of your presence ’twere easy to turn from the heights  
I must climb, and to find in the sunny delights  
Of my longing the gladness I crave. I could flee  
From the path I must follow, and hold you to me  
In possession defiant of duty, defiant  
Of all your denial, supremely reliant  
On need,—on your need and my own. To resist  
The pathetic appeal of those lips I have kissed,  
Till our souls came together; to hearken, and hear  
Them beseeching my help in a cry that is clear  
As the signal of love is forever, and stay  
In the distance—ah! this is the trial that may  
Overmaster my manhood, my being, at length.  
If I ever can reach you hands in the strength  
Of uplifting to serve, and not sacrifice each  
With its weakness, not long will you wait, and beseech

For the aid I can render. I pity your need  
With a pity unbounded, that can but proceed  
From a love that is boundless. I hear the appeals  
Of your heart with a throb of my soul that reveals  
The deep pain I must suffer, the yearnings intense,  
And the buffetings cruel. My way is as dense  
With perplexities now as your wilderness long  
Has been lonely and sorrowful; in it the song  
Of sweet faith has died out into silence. Too stoutly  
Distrust of myself is asserted, devoutly  
To let me from self turn away to the might  
That is certain. I dare not kneel down, and invite  
For us both the one help that alone can avail,  
When I know my petition must falter and fail  
On account of so feeble desire. For confess  
It I will: I would rather this moment possess  
The great love that you give me, and know it my own  
Undenying, in fullest of plenitude shown,  
Than to pray you may learn its withholding, or learn  
What is easier far, — to forget. And they burn  
In my bosom, these words that might hint of return  
I would make, as I do and I must; while my prayer  
For denial of speech would go out on the air  
With a wish that itself be denied, and my plea  
For the strength to forget would but mockery be  
Of too cherished remembrances.

“No: on the reed  
Of my resolute purpose I lean, till to plead  
For a better support I may dare, feeling true  
To the want I shall syllable, pulsating through  
My petition a longing sincere. Very tender  
Indeed to the soul that in perfect surrender  
Of wish and of will comes to him, are the greetings  
Of God; but he never can hush the wild beatings



Within a poor heart that denyingly holds  
To its pain. All my love your strong feeling infolds;  
And as vain as I know it, as wicked as vain,  
And as certain of sorrow, so sweet is the pain,  
That I welcome it. Held in its clinging embraces,  
We two may clasp hands, and touch hearts, though the  
spaces  
Of infinite distance are rolling between."

While he still on the reed of his purpose would lean,  
She made answer to answer of his: —

"That you came

When I called you, can never be set to your blame,



Since you thought your response a denial instead.  
To my hunger and longing you tenderly said  
The sweet words that were manna to me ; and they fed  
When I famished. What need had my poor heart to hear  
Your profession of love ? I believe that the ear  
Of cold Venus de Medici yonder would glow  
Into rose, would you once for the marble let flow  
Your warm current of masterful, passionate speech.  
There is only one utterance now that can reach,  
To revive it, this poor fainting soul that is mine, —  
The assurance that still you do love me. Some sign  
I must have, in my need, of that love, or I die.  
You will grant it hereafter as quick, when I cry  
To you over the deeps ?

“My beloved, I try

To be patient and silent and brave. I would add  
Not a pang to your struggle, nor sigh to your sad  
But heroic endeavor. Instead, I would make  
A glad martyr to-day of myself for your sake,  
If I only could bring you content. For I love  
You. So simple a thing to declare, but, above  
All assertion, so forceful and sweet ! The mild passion  
Of maidens at school in as eloquent fashion  
Might syllables take ; but this love that I feel  
Is as truer than that as the ring of white steel  
Is more vibrant than lead. 'Tis a passion grown stronger  
And deeper, and richer and sweeter, the longer  
It slumbered : awakened, it holds me, and sways  
Me at will. In the glow of those glad summer days  
When it thrilled me at first, I half fancied 't would seem,  
When we parted, as only a midsummer dream :  
In this sombre November the warmth of its flushes  
I feel, as the maiden can feel her first blushes  
At flattery paid ; and so warmly it gladdens me

Now with its color and life, that it saddens me  
Even to tears.

“Foolish tears! As they fall  
Down my face, I am glad that hereafter not all  
Of my bitterest weeping can rob it of sweetness  
Your kisses have left; and my very unmeetness  
For holy caresses so tender and pure  
Can but make them in sanctified blessing endure.  
O my friend! my belovèd! so close have I been  
To the worst in the world, that the shadow of sin  
Hovers grimly about me to frighten and grieve me.  
Not mine was the fault; and, my darling, believe me,  
The sin was no sin of intent, if to some  
Like a sin it appeared.

“By and by you will come  
To my love and my need, as it seems to you best,



With your love and your plenty. You cannot have guessed  
From these hints, my heart's heart, how I hunger and long  
For your comforting presence and cheer, or how strong  
Is the love I have weakly declared. With your face  
Looking into my own, and your loving embrace  
Giving courage and strength, I could better translate  
A brief page of love's living epistle. Sweet fate  
That will bring me some blesseddest glimpses of you!  
For I love you! And this is my only adieu."



XXV.



EARLY winter went by. It was fortunate, truly,  
That Trent was so much in demand;  
for unruly,  
Impulsive desire must have led him astray  
From his purpose so true, but for  
need to obey

The imperative calls of the public. By night  
He would speak to the crowds; and by day he would write  
For still wider persuasion in print. Had they known  
Who so eagerly heard him, how often a moan  
Of disquiet was hid by the utterance strong  
That so quieted them, or how frequent the wrong  
He was fighting within bore him down, while he wielded  
His blows on the wrong from without, they'd have  
yielded

Their sympathy freely as yielding their praise.  
There were hours when he rose like a victor, and days  
When he sank in the dust of defeat. There were seasons  
When Duty made plain all her eloquent reasons  
For holding him firm to his wearying course;  
There were times when his passion took terrible force,  
And so bitterly pressed him, so sharply assailed him,  
That faith in its feebleness faltered and failed him,



And night swept him into its pitiless gloom.  
It may be he was morbid by nature. The bloom  
Of all beautiful things, it is certain, bore fruit  
In his thought; and he wisely and kindly was mute,  
If but ashes of apples he frequently tasted  
Instead, or but seldom unhappily hasted  
To tell of their bitterness.

Men are too free  
With complaining recitals. Far better 't would be



For us all, if the troubles that fret and annoy  
Were but hidden away in a privacy coy,  
And not prated about to our fellows. Far better  
To make them for sunshiny gladness our debtor,  
Than beg of their sympathy often, and take  
Of its costly bestowal at will, when the ache  
Of their life may be deeper than ours. If we urge  
Our own woe on their ears, and go wailing a dirge



Over happiness fled, we shall hear enough minor  
 From them and ourselves to forget all the finer  
 And happier music of hearts.

When he went  
 For another day's tarry at Rivermet, Trent  
 Was subdued in demeanor, and notably carried  
 Himself with restraint; but he partially parried  
 His Geraldine's questioning look. He was weaker  
 Than wont, he explained. The hard strain on a speaker  
 Had worn him uncommonly. Seldom he slept  
 Until nigh to the morning. His labor had kept  
 Him from adequate rest through the day; he had used  
 Of his vital resources too freely, abused  
 The great blessing of health, and must pay for it dear  
 In depression and dulness.

She gave him the cheer  
 Of her outflowing love, though it seemed to her heart  
 An impassable wall had arisen to part  
 Them still further. She knew by some keen intuition,  
 That once he would come on his lover's glad mission.  
 Of love with a happier feeling, and say  
 Sweeter words than she now must expect. And the  
 day

For distrusting might come to her soon! With the dread  
 Of its darkness upon her, she faintingly fled  
 To her Father, and unto his pity she cried  
 For the strength she would need.

When she, troubled, replied  
 To the honest complaining of Trent, though evasive  
 As honest, she urged him with feeling persuasive  
 To seek a long rest amid scenes that were new.

"Put an ocean of green, or an ocean of blue,  
 Between work and yourself," she suggested. "Go over

The billowy prairies, or turn again rover  
By sea, and get hearty and happy and strong."

"But the time of my absence might seem to you long ;  
And next summer, remember, we were to be wed."  
"So you planned it, I know," hesitating she said ;  
"But it may be God means us to wait. I have prayed  
That our marriage may be in some manner delayed,  
If for any good reason it should not take place  
As we fixed." And the serious look on her face  
Told how earnest she was. "When the winter is ended,  
The wealth of your life will have been so expended,  
You'll need a whole summer of rest to regain  
The great loss. Go away. If it seem to be plain  
When the late summer comes, that our wedding should  
wait

But your presence, no distance can be to you great  
That you journey on errand so glad ;" blushing now  
At her words, as she uttered them shyly.

"I bow

To your bitter decree," he responded, not daring  
To trust a more serious answer. "The faring  
Of bold pioneers in the West has invited  
The vagabond in me since youth. I have slighted  
The call every year: now I'll heed it, and go  
To the region of sunset so soon as the snow  
Shall have vanished. But trust me to come to you soon  
When you freely will give me the coveted boon  
Of yourself."

"And I freely will do it when truly  
It seems to be best; yet I would not unduly  
Make haste. We must try to be certain, and take  
Every step as the Master may lovingly make  
The way clear. He will show us his path for our feet

If we ask him."

"Your faith is as certain and sweet  
As my own is uncertain and vapid too often.

'T would light up the gloomiest way, and would soften  
The hardest and ruggedest path. Do you never  
Have doubts of the Master?—of all your endeavor  
To touch him for healing of soul, when you press  
To his side in despair of aught else?"



"I were less  
A weak woman, and more like a saint, could I hold  
To my faith without doubting forever. As bold  
As was Peter, he sank in the wave when he walked  
To his Lord; and my weakness has bitterly mocked  
Me at times when I should have been strong. We must doubt,

I suppose, being human ; and heartsick, without  
Any help of ourselves, we too often must stem  
The thick crowd of our doubts and our fears, ere the hem  
Of the Healer's soft garment we touch."

"And you feel  
That the Master walks always near by, and will heal,  
If you press through the throng to his side? Though  
unseen,  
You are sure he is there?"

"There are times when between  
Him and me I can see only blackness ; but still  
I believe I shall find him through doing his will ;  
And he never is lost. It is I who have strayed  
From the way that he journeys. I seek him, afraid,  
Till I hear his quick question, 'Who touched me?' and then  
I am glad."

Far less tender and reverent men  
Would have thrilled to her thought and her tone sympathetic,  
And smothered in silence all questions heretic  
That might have been syllabled.

"Faith is magnetic  
As love, when it speaks from a heart beating free  
With the healthiest life ; and your faith upon me  
Is electric. I feel it more keenly, indeed,  
Than I feel my own faith from within. When my need  
Is the greatest, I wonder if once I believed,  
Or made pretence of trust."

She was troubled and grieved  
At his words.

"You are living, it may be, too mainly  
In self, are depending too much and too vainly  
On strength of your own, to be sure of the way,  
Or of light in the dark. We must serve him to-day  
With our might, when the strongest we feel, would we know

The Lord's help in our weakness. The farther we go  
Independent of him, in an idle belief  
In ourselves, the more certain some brambles of grief  
Will be found in our pathway to prick us, the more  
Is it sure that our questions will trouble us sore.  
It is easy to doubt," a quick thrill running through  
Her brief words as she uttered them. "Men who, like you,  
Are endowed with large manhood and generous life,  
Have the amplest endowment for doubting. The strife  
Of unfaith and belief must oft carry them far  
From the face and the voice of the Master. They are  
To be envied for strength, to be pitied for weakness.  
Their manliness strong and assertive the meekness  
Of faith overcomes; and a faith that is proud  
Of the manhood that holds it will some time be bowed  
To the dust."

"If I ever have foolishly classed  
My weak self with the strong, the brief season is passed,"  
He responded half bitterly. "Few are so weak,  
And so conscious of weakness, as I. But I seek  
The great Fountain of strength without finding, and dwell  
Weary days in a desert where flows but a well  
Of deep bitterness ever, and drink till I thirst  
As do they who are famishing utterly. Cursed  
By the keenest of longings for peace and sweet quiet  
Of soul, I am held where the tumult and riot  
Are greatest, till often I sigh for the rest  
Of that sleep never ending."

She trembled, and pressed  
Back the tears that her sympathy quick could have shed.

"But you always are out of your desert-place led,  
When at last you are willing to follow the leading  
Of God, are you not? Our most pitiful pleading



Is vain, if we make it while wickedly clinging  
To ways that we ought to forsake. The sweet bringing  
Of peace to our souls is along the hard road  
Of some duty we would not perform." And there glowed  
In her face the glad light of a full consecration.

"Perhaps if we knew not some great desolation  
Of God," he rejoined, "we should never feel sure  
Of his fatherhood; and if we cannot endure  
To be fatherless so for a little, how could  
We be orphaned forever? Believing is good  
That will bring an occasional glimpse of his face,  
To make certain he is. I am glad of the grace  
Of my faith, that at times can believe so completely,  
And yours that so seldom can doubt, as they sweetly  
Make better my life."

"But your faith may be fervent  
And certain as mine, if you go as the servant  
Each day of a Master most loving, who cares  
But to bless you in service," she said. Unawares  
She was blending rebuke with her words of appeal;  
Yet no chiding of hers could be harsh. "You must feel.  
In your trouble and doubt, that you have not in all things  
Lent willing obedience. Out of the small things  
Of selfish idolatry oftenest grow  
The great forests of doubt, into which we may go,  
Beyond sunlight and shadow, far into the night."

"But we always come out into morning and light?"

"You and I, let us hope." And she smiled rather sadly.  
"Some souls there may be who go onward so madly  
Intent on their own wicked wills, that they sink  
In abysses we miss, and are lost. When I think



Of their pitiful madness, their longing distress  
In the dark, I could weep ; for the way that we press  
Is a hard enough way at the best. You and I,  
When it troubles us most, may find comforting nigh ;  
But these wayfaring souls, without help or a hope,  
Can but wearily on in the wilderness grope  
Till the end."

So they talked of the holiest things  
Of the heart. So he drank from the up-welling springs  
Of her beautiful faith, till his spirit grew stronger.  
He left her sweet patience at length, but no longer,  
As to it he came, full of bitter unrest.  
The old song of belief that had slept in his breast  
Woke to music again in a strain that was finer  
And sweeter than once for the tremulous minor  
That thrilled it. Complaint with new blessedness sharing,  
He soberly sang by the way of

#### WAYFARING.

The way is long, O Lord, that leads  
To cooling springs and fragrant meads :  
I weary of its weary length ;  
I lose all heart and hope and strength,  
As here I halt my tired feet  
And pray for rest so far, so sweet.

I thank thee for a halting-place  
Made glad by thine own smiling face ;  
I thank thee that the dusty way  
Thy footsteps knoweth day by day ;  
I thank thee that some path there be  
From pain and care to peace and thee.

Its rugged steeps I would not mind,  
If, daily climbing, I could find  
Secure repose at day's decline  
A little nearer thee and thine;  
If always from the mountain-peaks  
My faith could see the land it seeks.

But when through gloomy vales I go,  
That no glad sunshine ever know;  
When even thy dear presence seems  
A far-off thing of doubt and dreams,—  
Forgive me, Lord, if then I faint,  
And murmur oft, and make complaint.

I know my times are in thy hand;  
I long for light to understand  
How thou canst for each pilgrim care.  
How thou canst hear each pleading prayer,  
How unto thee each soul is known  
As if it walked the world alone.

And some time I may comprehend.  
The way is long; but at its end  
A clearer vision waits the sight.  
In thy dear garden of delight,  
Wayfaring done, let me abide  
Where never falls an eventide.



## XXVI.



T was later by less than a fortnight,  
that Trent  
Gave a lecture one night in the vil-  
lage of Ghent.  
He had firmly decided he would not  
again  
Meet his friend, Mrs. Lee; but each  
purpose of men

Is uncertain of issue. One only of all  
The great number of faces that crowded the hall  
Was familiar, and that one — was hers. As he caught  
Her first answering look, a brief moment he fought  
With his passion for mastery; then with the art  
Of his utterance quickly he moved every heart  
To responses of sympathy.

Who can define  
What is eloquence? Is it some thought half divine  
And all noble? Or is it the audible sign  
Of some feeling within that is striving to leap  
Into being of speech? Is true eloquence deep  
As the orator's soul, and as deep as the hearer's  
He touches? Indeed, is it true that he mirrors  
Some innermost thought of our own, unexpressed  
Hitherto, and unformed, when we feel in our breast  
The pulsations of pleasure that syllables seek  
Without finding? Is eloquence strength for the weak

In expression, and lips for the dumb, who may speak  
Through the wonderful words of another?

The lecture

Was over at last, and the ready conjecture  
Of Trent became truth. Mrs. Lee was with friends  
In the place on a visit.

“The time comprehends

A surprise the most happy for me in thus hearing  
And meeting you now,” she remarked ; and, appearing  
Unmoved in demeanor as he did, she asked  
Him to go with her friends to their home.

If they masked

Every passionate feeling in plain commonplace ;  
If he sat amid strangers, and looked in her face  
As he looked into theirs, with the courteous grace  
Of attentiveness only to speech that was clever  
Or trite as it chanced,—it may be his endeavor  
Was small ; for his passion was passive. He curbed  
It so stoutly and well, that it little disturbed  
His composure at present. To-morrow ? What matter  
Defeats yet to come, if to-day only flatter  
With victory ?

Leaving them all in an hour,

With placid serenity passing for power  
Over self, he went out to his solitude grim  
With its weakness defiant of strength. When to him,  
But a day or two later, this brief message came,  
In his breast he could feel the fierce breathings of flame :  
“O my friend ! are we always and always like this  
To go on ? Is a touch of your hand, or a kiss  
Of your lips, to be all I can ever have granted  
Of you ? *You* could banish the ghost that has haunted  
Me long. *You* could lift me up into the sun  
From these shivering shadows.

“How much you have done  
For me now I can never reveal. As your debtor  
I ever must be, unless loving you better  
Than even I dare to confess is a payment  
Acceptable. Ah! when I sleep in the raiment  
Of death, will they look in my face, comprehending  
How long and how sorely I needed befriending



That God only gives through his image?—the soul  
Of a man's loving nature, to guide and control  
My weak waywardness?—love that should hold my behavior  
In line with its purity true, be my savior  
From all that could touch me to hurt or assoil,

In a merciful tenderness pour the sweet oil  
Of its gladness on life's troubled waters, infold  
All my faults in its mantle of charity, hold  
Me apart in its own blessed heaven?

“I know,  
Could you stand by me, darling, (God grant it be so!)  
When at last I am but a white silence, you'd hear  
A new message to *you* through the calm atmosphere  
Round about me. My lips might not move; but as clear  
As the clearest articulate speech they would tell  
Of the hunger that starved me to death. And so well  
Would you then comprehend all the longing and need  
I had suffered, I think you would pitying plead  
For the seal of that silence in mercy to break,  
That I might not eternally want. For your sake,  
My beloved, to tenderest speech I would come,  
Though the highest archangel might bid me be dumb;  
Out of pitiful rest the white silence would rise,  
And beguile you with kisses, and quiet the cries  
Of your heart for the loss of my love, and the grave  
Would in mercy release me to you.

“But a slave  
To the hardest taskmaster — to Life — should not think  
How much kinder a master might Death be. I drink  
Of the bitterest draughts every day, then I dip  
My cup deep in the well of your love, and I sip  
Till its sweetness has gladdened me. Always athirst  
And an hungered I am. My one darling! the worst  
Of the Magdalenes dared to come near to the Christ;  
And her faith, that was loving the sweetest, sufficed  
To redeem her from sin. If no virtue were mine  
But to love you, I fancy that this would incline  
The one Master to pity me. Wicked as one  
Who has never been pardoned, or ne'er has begun



To be penitent, still I could love you no more,  
Were I good as the angels of God."

As before,  
When she called to him thus in her passionate speech,  
He responded, as moved by it strongly.

"You teach  
The deep meanings of words," he made answer. "You  
tell me

Of love far beyond my belief; you compel me  
To marvel that such a great love can be given  
To me. And for what? O my friend! I have striven  
To solve the hard problem, have striven to still  
The strong, masterful throbs of my heart; but the will  
Is as weak as the reason. Why love should lay hold  
Of my being with mastery cruel as bold,  
Is as dark and as blind as the will to resist it  
Is feeble. To-day I should hardly enlist it,  
If help were at hand that could victory give  
To my feeble resistance. To-day I would live  
In this marvellous love and the blessing it brings me.

"The honeycomb shelters the bee that quick stings me.  
I taste of the sweets of your love but to feel  
The sharp pain that its riches of blessing conceal.  
You can never be mine. We are parted as much  
As if never I felt the soft lingering touch  
Of your kisses,—are parted as certain and wide  
As the east and the west. If you hungered and died  
In my absence, I could not come close to your side  
In the nearness of love's divine freedom to weep.  
Were I sleeping to-day the unanswering sleep  
Of the grave, you must stand in the distance, and say  
But a tearless farewell.

"I am going away

When the buds begin bursting. Your duty and mine  
Both demand that I should. We must follow the line  
Of our separate fates. What your duty may be  
I can only imagine: my own is to me  
As unyielding as God. It is holding me now  
With its fingers of steel, and in calmness I bow —  
Though in merely the fiction, the semblance, of loyalty,  
Need not be said — to its rigorous royalty.  
Still, while I walk in the way that it urges  
Me on, I can feel the impetuous surges  
Of passion within me responding to yours;  
I can longingly look back on your face as it lures  
My return. Set it steadily forward, nor let  
It look backward to me with its haunting regret.  
Let us walk the two ways that lead farther apart,  
As if love were a lie, and we lived without heart.

“Am I bitter and cruel? Forgive me, and know  
That I write out of burning unrest.

“I shall go

To the West in a month, to find peace, if I can,  
On its plains and its mountains. The rigorous ban  
Of my duty forbids me to see you again  
Before going. I think if the strongest of men  
Were to stand at your side, with his purpose as true  
To another as purpose that God ever knew,  
He would falter, and love you, and linger — unless  
You compelled him to leave. So in safety I press  
The last passionate kiss on your beautiful face  
But in fancy: I hold you to me through the space  
That divides us, but dare not in parting come near;  
And I speak idle words could your heart only hear  
You would echo them back with such winningness, I  
Should wait near you to listen forever. Good-by!”

She began her reply with the utterance strong  
Of a passionate nature unmastered.

“I long  
For your presence and cheer with a longing that leaps  
Every barrier now, and compels it; that keeps  
You beside me wherever you go. I shall cling  
To your hand, though you journey as far as the spring



Is from winter, and climb to the uttermost heights  
Of the earth; for I hold as the crown of delights  
In all good that is fruitage of love, the keen sense  
Of a bodily presence in absence—the tense  
That takes hold of my yesterday's doing and being,  
And keeps it material still to my seeing  
To-day. You made yesterday worth such a keeping  
To me. When you entered my life, all its weeping

To smiles of thanksgiving and gladness was turned.  
I have learned the true meaning of life: I have learned  
The sublimest of charity. Out of the wild  
Of my desert so dreary, your love has beguiled  
Me to come; but alas for the many who faint  
On the blistering sands, and whose feeble complaint  
Is not heard! And alas for the souls that are lost  
Ere the desert so barren and burning is crossed!

“My belovèd! you cannot take leave of me here.  
If our paths run apart, you are always as near  
As affection can bring you; so near, that I share  
In your nobleness, feel the uplift of the air  
That you breathe, am made better and truer by you.  
It were folly to bid you a mocking adieu  
When I know you must stay by my side in the spirit,  
If not in the flesh. And my soul needs you near it  
So bitterly often! So often it cries  
For the aid you can render, and waits the replies  
Of your heart with so weary a waiting, I think  
It would kill me, if now you should utterly sink  
From my sight into echoless silence.

“And yet,  
Though my face may look back with its haunting regret  
That will haunt it forever, I see but a dim  
And a shadow-like semblance or spectre of him  
Whom so madly I love. The true self that I need  
With such hunger of needing will swiftly recede  
Out of reach. And I feel so defrauded! The whole  
Of my womanhood owns you its master. My soul,  
Being cheated of you, like a slave in distress  
Can but moan by the way, with no bounty to bless  
It, and bring it again to the face of its lord.  
Without you I am always and only the ward

Of tyrannical want, and my poverty begs  
 For some opiate cup I may drain to the dregs,  
 And forget the great wealth I have missed.

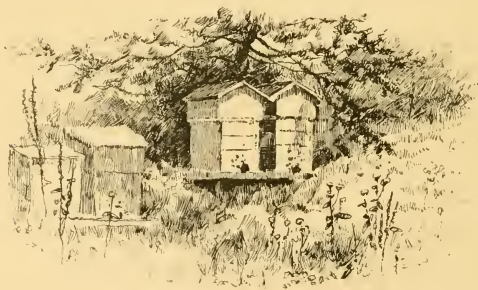
“Am I writing

Unreason? Demented, am I but inditing  
 Vagaries absurd, as the contrary feelings  
 Of love I express in this manner? Revelings  
 Thus opposite ought not, perhaps, to be made  
 The same moment.

“If wild I may be, I have weighed  
 The hard problem before us, with reason that held  
 Me above the great hunger of love, and compelled  
 Me to heed. You have work in the world, and I will  
 Not make doing it harder. To-day I would still  
 Every longing of mine, but to spare you a pang  
 Of disquiet. The hope and the faith that you sang  
 Ere you saw me must yet in your singing abide,  
 Or I shall not forget that I ought to have died  
 Before hearing and seeing you. O my heart's heart!  
 Let me feel your strong throbbing again ere we part;  
 Let it teach me the courage of faith and of hope,  
 As along in the desert I desolate grope.  
 You will pardon the prayer? I'm not practised at praying,  
 And chiefly, I fear, have the habit of saying  
 My prayers unto you.

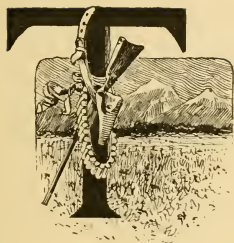
“‘God be with you!’ I say  
 Now to *him*. For *your* sake I can fervently pray,  
 If I may not or dare not look God in the face  
 For myself. And I pray that some heaven-sent grace  
 May bedew you with patience wherever you go.  
 We have tested life deep enough, darling, to know  
 That victorious living is better and truer  
 Than happiness. May you the battle endure  
 Like a victor, and win, if not happiness, peace!

And remember, belovèd, I never shall cease  
To aspire for you, hope for you, love you, be proud  
Of your many successes, as if in the crowd  
Of the world I alone had the right. And who ought  
To be prouder than I? In my future, the thought  
That I once was your friend, though forgotten I be,  
Will seem sweet as another's remembrance to me.  
I would rather have had my brief portion of you  
Than be held in possession most perfect and true,  
For a lifetime, of all other men. I am weak  
With the passionate gladness that flows to my cheek  
As you kiss me farewell. I am faint with the pain  
That is flooding my heart as I call you in vain  
Through the widening distance. The mist in my eyes  
Becomes heavy, and stifles my pitiful cries."





## XXVII.



RENT was true to his purpose. He  
went to the West  
Without stopping to see Mrs. Lee. To  
the test  
Of her presence he would not, he dare  
not, again  
Bring himself.

And his leave-takings troubled him when  
He saw Geraldine last. A great tenderness thrilled  
Through her loving good-byes. He could easy have willed  
To remain with her now, and possess her without  
Any waiting; for over him brooded a doubt  
That he could not have set into speech, — an impression,  
That, leaving her thus, he was putting possession  
Beyond him forever. Her words of farewell  
Were so solemnly tender and sweet, that they fell  
Like a sad prophecy on his ears.

He had penned  
A long letter to Isabel, making amend  
For refusing the cry of her heart, by replying  
In echoes as passionate. Firmly denying  
Himself the great gladness of holding her yet  
Once again to his breast, his quick pen would not let  
Him keep silent completely. It revelled in words  
That to listening of love were as music of birds;

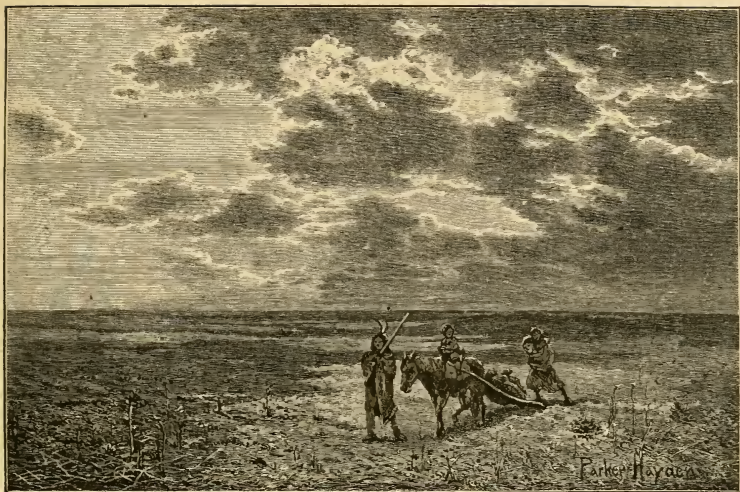
And it told as with tears of his frequent unrest,  
Of the longing and fears that his being possessed.

You will say he was weak. Let it pass to his credit  
That he had discerned the same truth, and had said it  
With bitter reproaches of self. And, beside,  
Let it temper your judgment that he had denied  
A temptation the greatest,—to go to her, give  
To the winds every promise and duty, and live  
On her riches of love. He was weak, and he knew it:  
His weakness had caused him too often to rue it,  
To leave him in doubt. He was weak: so are all  
Who believe in their strength; and the many who fall  
Into folly and sin are the arrogant souls  
Who stand censor to others.

We go to the goals

Of our strong aspiration in weakness that trips us  
Again and again. The hard fortune that whips us  
With discipline's lashes has oftenest found  
Opportunity swift when we fell to the ground  
With our faces uplifted in scorn of the weak.  
If we find the great blessing of strength, we must seek  
For it humbly, believing our need to be sore.

If the hills of the East have a charm to restore  
Balmy peace to the troubled of soul, the wide plains  
Of the West are as richly endowed. He regains  
The sweet quiet of being who goes to them faint  
With long striving for victory; doubt and complaint  
Become rest and rejoicing; the rigors that goaded  
Him on melt away in the sunlight, so loaded  
With burdens of glory it glows like the blazing  
Of tropical heat; and eyes weary with gazing.  
The roll and the sweep of their reaches are grand



As the ocean unbounded; the billows of land  
 Float away to horizons far lapping the sky;  
 And the magical breezes blow ardently by,  
 As if bearing rich argosies over the sea  
 To some haven of hope. If infinitude be  
 Ever laid before mortals for dim comprehending,  
 It hides in the plains and their reaches unending.

The saunterer's mission was Trent's. He fulfilled it  
 Religiously. Time was his own: if he killed it,  
 And buried it out of his sight, he was winning  
 The wager of life. And he thought it not sinning,  
 In search of his bodily good, and the peace  
 Of his spirit, to throw away care, and to cease  
 From all studious habits. He lived like the men  
 Whom he met by the way. He abandoned his pen  
 For his rifle; spent weeks as a hunter with those  
 Who made hunting a business; laid down at the close

Of each radiant day with his face to the stars;  
And sleep opened for him the imprisoning bars  
Of his being, and freed him to perfect content.  
The glad winds of the West in their sport came and went  
Where unsheltered he lay; and, as boldly they kissed him,  
Their marvellous vigor flowed into his system,  
And so he grew strong.

He was seldom in reach  
Of the mails, and but seldom, therefore, did the speech  
Of his friends come to gladden or sadden him. One  
Wrote as little of love as if scarcely begun  
To believe herself loving; the other withheld  
Not a passionate word, and her passion compelled  
His replies. But he wrote to his Geraldine merely  
The messages born of a love that sincerely  
Is guarded of duty, — such letters as most  
Of men send to their wives when their love is a ghost  
Of the thing it once was, and comes only in sight  
As a matter of habit when rarely they write.

Did he love her? He questioned thus daily. In vain  
Did he say to his heart that the answer was plain  
In the question itself. “Love *may* doubt,” he could hear  
His heart reason. “The love that is surest may fear  
For its very existence. Wild passion may hide  
It from sight; but it will not so swiftly have died  
As you think. It is modest. It sits in the shade  
Of assertion unblushing, and trembles, afraid  
For its life. But hot passion is bold as the day,  
And it knows no rebuking, nor fears to betray  
Itself ever and always.”

He held by the love  
He had pledged to be true to, before and above  
The strong feeling that shadowed it, e'en though his lips

Were so dumb to expression while passion's eclipse  
Hovered over. Nor once did he say to its face  
That it could not be love; that it came to a place  
Not divinely its own; that the heaven-guided guest  
Had more recently come to abide in his breast,  
And the early intruder must go. Never through  
The long days was he thus to his pledges untrue,  
If untrue in a deeper and wickedder sense  
He confessed himself. Either in fact or pretence  
He was loyal to love in the positive, though  
The superlative tried him for treason.

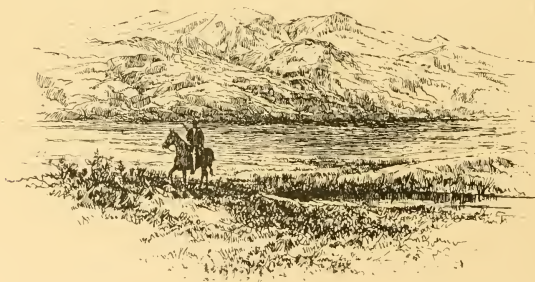
The glow

Of young summer grew fierce on the plains, and he took  
His way thence to the mountains; there swift he forsook  
All the commoner haunts for those places where only  
The few ever come, and in solitude lonely  
Communed with the grandeur around him. He rode  
Up and down the green valleys; he made his abode  
For the night where the night overtook him, and slept  
With no tent overhead but the azure that swept  
From one summit of gray to another; he mounted  
Magnificent peaks, till in wonder he counted  
Their neighbors magnificent, lifting afar  
Their white crowns to the purple; in gorges that scar  
The calm features of Nature like pitiless gashes  
Some Titan has made with his terrible slashes,  
He marvelled anew, till this life, growing small  
Mid the greatnesses round, seemed to dwindle, and fall  
Out of sight; and he moved but an atom in space  
Overhung by the Infinite's glorious grace.

In the grand exaltation of spirit that came  
To him here, life had never a worthier aim  
Than *to be*. Nothing grander than being can seem,



Where the mountains lift upward, majestic, supreme,  
And eternal. They stand like old statues of time,  
Looking God in the face. With the world in its prime,  
They are hoary of head; and they gleam in the noons,  
Turn to crimson in sunsets, and gray in the moon's  
Mellow glory, as through the long ages asleep.  
As the shadows of darkness fast over them sweep  
When the moon is away, they grow ghostly and grim,  
Till their majesties fade into distances dim,  
And the hush of their silence is solemn as death.  
When the dawn is at hand, its first crimsoning breath  
Floats across the long reach of their summits to crown them  
With colors of life; the dark shadows slip down them,  
And seek the defiles where they lurk through the day;  
Clear and strong their dim outlines come forth from the gray  
Of the morning; and through the baptistical rays  
Of the sun all their silence is priestly with praise.





## XXVIII.



WHEN the midsummer heat to its uttermost  
burned,

From his wild mountaineering alone  
Trent returned

To a town of the mines, for some let-  
ters expected.

On reaching the place he grew strangely  
dejected

In spirit, and felt a foreboding of ill

That he could not shake off, though he bent all his will  
To the task.

It was time for his summons from her  
He had promised to wed. If he went, should he err  
Against both, to give vows before God to be true  
Ere his passion was dead, and when truly he knew  
It must face him with mockery? Should he not sin  
Against God and his soul, were he soon to begin  
Wedded life, while a woman he never might wed  
Could so burden his peace with the words that she said?  
Were it not the clear wisdom for him to postpone  
Consummation distrusted till doubt should have flown,  
And till love in sweet certainty came to its own?  
In this questioning mood, there was put in his hand  
A small package of letters, that quickly he scanned  
For the two he cared chiefly to read; and he broke  
Mrs. Lee's first of all. It was passionate; spoke,



In the phrases she forcibly used, of her feeling  
Intense; called upon him anew for his healing  
The hurt, "the sweet hurt of this sorrowful love"  
(That had grown in her being beyond and above  
All beside, making other loves seem but the sign  
Of weak tolerance now), with the oil and the wine  
Of his love-bearing speech: it, in short, was a letter  
Of credit drawn on him at sight, as a debtor  
To love, without limit, and paid by his passion  
In throbs of response.

With a face growing ashen,  
When once he had fairly begun to peruse  
The long letter of Geraldine, this was the news  
That he read of her final decision, the sum  
Of her reasons for failing to say he should come:—

“MY DEAR FRIEND, —

“Turn your face to the shadow a while.  
You may make believe then, that I say with a smile  
What the tears give me trouble to write. I am sure  
That God bids me speak, or I could not endure  
The hard duty.

“I love you: let this be as plain  
As I ever have made it to you, and remain  
A fixed thing in your memory; though to refrain  
From the simple confession were wiser, perhaps.  
I shall love you, I think, till eternity laps  
Upon time. It is sweet just to say it once more  
While the right is still left me.

“You loved me before  
You had come to the measure of love in degree  
That is highest. You loved me as much as in me  
Was the power to call out your deepest expression  
Of love. I believe it, and hold the possession  
Of that which was mine, and which may be mine yet,  
Above rubies.

“But, though I may weep with regret  
That I could not the depths of your nature so stir  
As another has done, I no longer demur  
Against fortune that proved me thus weak to excite  
Your strong feeling, and showed you the higher delight  
That I could not awaken. And blame cannot live  
In my heart against you. I have nought to forgive  
Of unfaith: you have been to your pledges as true  
As true purpose could hold you. A greater love grew  
In your breast, and it would not be stifled.

“I knew  
Months ago of the struggle that wearied you, saw  
How you battled in secret to conquer a law  
Of your nature, and feared the defeat that impended.

You're battling to-day: but the fight will have ended  
When this you have read; for I claim you no longer  
As mine. You may yield to the love that is stronger  
Than love given me, and be free to win much  
As may answer to yours. And God grant that it touch  
You to peace!

“I have struggled to say this so long;  
For I could not at first give you up. May the wrong  
Of my selfishness find its quick pardon! I hoped  
That my love might still hold you to me: but I groped  
In a path growing dark, for my will was arrayed  
Against God's; and my wishes were most, I'm afraid,  
For my happiness rather than yours.

“You will make  
No reply to this letter, but spare me the ache  
Of repeating the prayerful decision contained  
In it here. If you knew how my heart had complained  
To itself,—how with ready excuses it plied me,  
And long all the comfort of trusting denied me,—  
You could be but pitiful now, as you must.  
I have faith in your manhood and mercy: I trust  
In your silence to help me do right. For the way  
Opens clear to my sight; and you never must say  
To yourself or to me that you ought to fulfil.  
The faith plighted between us. I know that the will  
Of the Lord is against it. I know that he tells us  
To separate now; and he always compels us  
To hear him.

“You must not feel blame because I  
Make a sacrifice costly to me. By and by  
Compensation will come to my soul for the loss  
To my heart. By and by, shining sweetly across  
The hard path that I go, I shall see the dear smile  
Of my Master; and that will the way so beguile,

I shall cease to regret.

“Do not think of me, then,

As unhappy forever, or urge me again,  
Out of pity and honor mistaken, to wed you.  
The love that against your own will has thus led you  
Apart from me quite, was permitted for some  
Divine purpose. I beg you, my friend, to be dumb  
While I study the lesson that to me is taught:  
When I fully have mastered it, life will have caught  
A deep meaning but now only dimly defined,  
And the Teacher will prove that his wisdom was kind.

“On a day that is distant, perhaps, we may stand  
Face to face in a friendship with strength to command  
Every thought of the past into silence and sleep.  
Until then you will see me no more, lest I reap  
Greater harvest of pain than to-day I must glean.  
May God bless you in love and in life! May you lean  
On his bosom for rest when you weary! May being  
Grow broader and richer henceforth to your seeing,  
And fill itself nobly with duties well done!  
God be with you, and keep you!

. . . “At last I have won  
The long conflict. Henceforth I shall think of you mainly  
As one who was dear, and is dead; and, if vainly  
I seek thus to put you away, I shall know  
That the Master would teach me still further, and go  
Through the ways of remembrance till he leads me far  
Where the pools of his peace and his blessedness are.

“Let me kiss you farewell, as a sister might kiss you  
Who felt that for years she must want you and miss you.  
Forgive the hot tears that will fall on your face.  
I am heart-worn and weak; but the pitying grace



Of our Father will strengthen me. Into your eyes  
Let me look once again, while the saddest good-byes  
That I ever have wept trickle over my cheeks,  
And my love its last picture for memory seeks.  
Breathe a prayer with me now that not always between  
The dear picture and me shall be tears.

“GERALDINE.”

As he read and re-read it, quick flushes of shame  
Brought the color anew to his cheeks, and swift blame  
Of himself fell upon him. He saw, as by clear  
Revelation, how weak he would always appear  
In her sight, and how wickedly love had been wronged.  
And he felt, that, in losing what once had belonged  
To him wholly, he lost a great treasure of worth  
Beyond any conception before.

The wide earth  
Was between them. He knew her too well to assail  
Her decision by reason or wish. To avail  
Against faith like her own, against purpose so strong  
Based upon it, he now must convince her of wrong  
Against him in her judgment, must show her that through  
All the days of his doubt he had ever been true  
To the highest ideal of love. Could he do it?  
He shrank from the question when thus he came to it.  
It hurt him deep down. It revealed to him clearly  
How false he had been; and for days he was nearly  
Distracted between all the bitter accusals  
Of conscience, the hungers of heart, the refusals  
Of shame-stricken manhood, that hourly beset him.  
For, turn where he would, they persistently met him,  
And harassed him, pricked him, defied him to scorn  
Of himself, till he wished he had never been born.



## XXIX.



N departing, thus troubled, beset, from  
the town,—

Was it accident?—something occurred  
that should crown

The unhappy condition of Trent. As  
he rode

Through a cañon, where foaming and  
musical flowed

A wild torrent, he found, by the bridle-path lying,  
A man who was dead, or at best appeared dying,  
Alone. He lay prone on his face. In his side  
Was a wound from which oozed the life-current, and dyed  
His apparel. He looked like a miner, but more  
Like the men who infest mining-camps to win ore  
By the turn of a card, not the stroke of a pick.

To dismount, and to lift the man up, was the quick  
And impetuous movement of Trent. As he laid  
The limp figure again at its length in the shade  
Of a pine overhanging, he gazed in its face.  
It was colored with death; but there lingered a trace  
Of an earlier beauty within it despite  
Many traces of reckless abandon. Its white  
And its haggard uplooking at Trent so deep stirred him,  
He groaned, “May God help you! I can’t.”

The man heard him,

And opened his eyes. They were burning, intense,  
With a haunted look in them that glad innocence  
Never gives. For an instant they gleamed upon Trent  
In such glaring and murderous way, that they sent  
A strange fear running through him, then softened.

“You’re not  
The sneak coward,” the man weakly whispered, “who shot  
Me, I see.” And his eyes closed again. “Lift me up.  
Let me drink — from your flask.”

“Mine is only a cup  
Of cold water,” Trent answered: “your own, it may be,  
Can the quicker revive you. I’ll search you, and see  
If it’s empty.”

He felt the man’s pockets, and took  
A canteen full of brandy from one, and the look  
Of quick death passed away from the man as he drank it.  
Then placing him easily there, with a blanket  
To bolster him up, Trent ripped open his shirt,  
And with awkward attention examined his hurt.  
It was mortal: no question of that.

“You are near  
The next world, my poor fellow,” said Trent. “Do you fear  
To go out of this into the other?”

A sneer  
Curled the colorless lips.

“I was never — afraid,”  
The man answered, with speech growing stronger. “I made  
My mind up — long ago — that some time — I should die  
In my boots. It’s a trifle — too soon — by and by  
Would have suited — me better, of course — but I’ll go  
Without flinching. A curse on the vagabond, though,  
Who waylaid me!” he said, sudden energy lending  
Itself to his words.

“And who was he?”

“If sending  
A ball through my body prove friendship, I’ll call him  
My friend,” he made answer. “Perdition befall him  
For this!” And he moaned in his pain.

“He should stretch  
A short rope for the deed he has done you, the wretch!  
Was it plunder, or hate?”

“We were partners: we quarrelled,  
As partners are certain to do. I had corralled



Too much — of the wealth, he declared; and he swore  
That unless I divided — again, he would bore  
A hole into my heart. He sneaked up — at the last —  
Unbeknown, and — you found me here, dying — as fast

As I could without help of the doctors."

He grew  
Half facetious as strength from the brandy swift flew  
Through his veins.

"Will you tell me his name? I will see  
That some effort is made to arrest him."

"'T would be  
To poor purpose. No soul saw him do it. He's free  
From all proof. Let him go to the devil the way  
That best pleases him."

"Is there no word I can say  
For you after you're gone?"

A keen agony spread  
O'er his face.

"There are none to regret me when dead.  
I am friendless,—a vagabond—worthless and worse.  
All my life has been simply a blight and a curse;  
But I'm going out game!" And he set his lips hard,  
As if battling with weakness.

"No life is so scarred  
And disfigured by sin but that blessing can fall  
On it through the one Life that was given for all,"  
Replied Trent.

"That's the stuff of the preachers: don't preach it  
To me! There's a hell for some men, and they'll reach it,  
For all of your preaching. I'm one of them."

Pain  
Of the body or soul made him wince.

He had lain  
A few seconds in silence, when Trent spoke again,—  
"God is father of all; and the Saviour of men  
Is a brother as loving, as willing, as we  
Can desire in our need. He says, 'Come unto me;'  
And no limit is set to the words. Will you hear him?"

"I've long been a comrade of Death, and I fear him  
Far less than the preachers. I'm growing too weak  
For much talking; and yet I have something to speak.  
Put the flask to my lips."

Trent complied, with his pity  
Deep moved for the man.

"At the East, in the city  
Of L——, is a woman,—my wife. You may learn  
Where she lives—and her name—from my papers,  
and earn

The reward of her gratitude should you soon bring  
The glad news of my death. If there be anything  
She supremely desires, it is early to know  
She is truly a widow."

Said Trent, "I will go  
To her on my return to the East, and will bear  
The sad message you wish."

"It's not likely she'll wear  
Any mourning," he sneered, going on as if Trent  
Had not spoken. "I left her, without her consent,  
Years ago. A fifth cousin of hers had been making  
Too free with her beauty. I left her, forsaking  
The home she had shamed. I enlisted, and soon  
They reported me dead. 'T would have been the one boon  
She most wanted,—my death; but I lived, though I bor-  
rowed

The name of another, and though my wife sorrowed  
In elegant black for the loss that was gain  
To her only. I lived, and must live—that was plain,  
When discharged from the army by orders my own.  
I came West—on the quiet—and wrote her. Alone  
Of all women and men from that time, she has known—  
Me as living, and known that she never could wed,  
Though a widow—in name, till again I was dead.



I have punished her so for the way she betrayed me.  
 Besides — for my punishment just — she has paid me  
 My price every year. I have lived on the sum —  
 She was willing to give — that I never might come  
 To life — there at her side.”

Hearing this, Trent became  
 Even pale as the speaker. He feared for the name  
 Of this woman so worse than one widowed. His breath  
 Grew as short as the man's who lay facing his death.

“She was proud — she was handsome,” the speaker resumed,  
 “And men worshipped her. Dozens — like me — have  
 assumed

That she loved them — devotedly. Stranger, beware!  
 When the news of this day to that woman you bear:  
 She will win you to love her — as always she wins  
 When it — suits her to try.

“Ah! the daylight — begins —  
 To fade — early. I thought — it was morning — my friend.”

With great effort Trent spoke, —

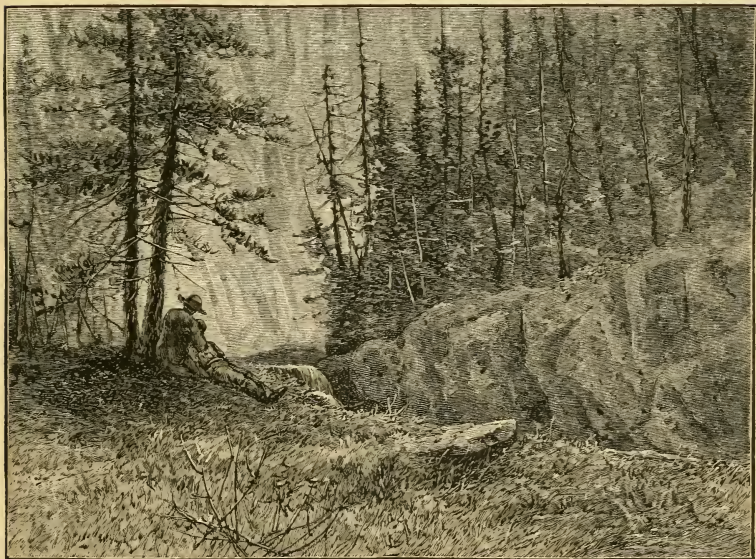
“It is noon; but the end  
 Of your life may appear like the close of a day.  
 It is twilight for you. In the dusk let us pray  
 That a morning of pardon be yours.” And beside  
 The man dying he knelt.

“O thou Saviour, who died  
 Between sinners, that sinners might live, see the soul  
 That is going to God unforgiven, and roll  
 Its black burden of guilt from it swiftly. Bend down  
 In beneficent mercy this moment, and crown  
 A poor life with the blessing of peace. Turn the heart  
 Of this sinner to penitence, Lord, thou who art  
 The one Master and Father of all. Make him yield



To the sweet ministration of Christ. Be revealed  
To him now, in this darkness of noonday, as one  
Who forgives and is kind; who is just, but whose Son  
Can redeem the most fallen to thee. Let him seek  
The great treasure of life at the last; and, as weak  
And uncertain he gropes for it now, take his hand,  
Divine Brother of men, and lead into the land  
Where the weakest can never sin more."

As he faltered,  
And ceased his petition, the dying face altered,  
The dying lips moved, as if shaping a prayer;  
And a smile settled on them, and fixed itself there.  
By the wayside, Death came in his silence, and none  
Could have seen his dark form in the noon of the sun;  
Yet he took the life up from the clay at his feet,  
And he bore it away with a motion so fleet



That the watcher knew not if it lingered, or went,  
But in awe the old marvel awaited.

As Trent

Became certain that life had gone out of the face  
Growing fairer before him, he rose from the place  
Where he knelt, and walked down to the torrent to lave  
His hot brow in its beauty and blessing. A grave  
Must be dug, and within it, perchance, he must bury  
Some part of his faith in his kind. How the merry,  
Mad music of waters grew sad to his ears!  
He was buffeted now by the bitterest fears  
That had ever assailed him. Who *was* the man dead  
In the shadow near by? And what woman had wed  
Him, dishonored her vows, and such penalty paid  
For her sin and his silence?

He tenderly laid

His cloak over the figure at length, after taking  
Whatever of value was on it. With aching  
Expectancy, then, he sat down to make clear  
In the papers before him the mystery here.  
As the first revelation, he started to see  
A fair portrait look out — that of Isabel Lee.



### XXX.



AJOR MELLEN to Rivermet went, as the  
summer

Grew long; and Miss Hope, as she met  
every comer,

Received him with courtesy winning and  
sweet

When he called,

“I am off for a rest; and my feet  
Would not carry me farther until I had tarried  
To look in your face,” he said warmly.

She parried  
His compliment gracefully, though she felt sure  
He was thinking her changed.

“But what makes you endure  
The hot season in town?” he made question. “You show  
The depression it causes. You surely should go  
To the seaside.”

“I may by and by,” she replied:  
“I have hardly been strong enough yet;” and she sighed  
In unconscious confession of weakness.

He spoke  
His regrets with more feeling than often he woke  
Into speech, and she looked at him wondering. Then  
She discovered his errand, and trembled.

“All men  
Who have met you,” he said, “must believe that you never

Can sicken, or change, or grow old. You are ever  
To look at them out of a face that is fair,  
From your windows of life ever young. You will wear  
In my sight the same smile that unceasing you wore  
That brief summer I saw you at first, and before  
I had come to my years of discretion."

He smiled

As if half in contempt of his past.

"I was wild

In those days," he went on, "and too wayward to win  
Your respect altogether. You held it a sin  
Pretty nearly, that I should declare as I did  
How I loved you. You chided me then, and forbid  
Me to see you again till I quite had outgrown  
The hot fancy that vexed you. You gave me a stone  
Of dislike when I begged for the bread that could feed me  
To worthier life,—your great love. Could you need me  
To-day as I need you, I'd give you the whole  
Of my being, my strength, all the body and soul  
That are mine. The old fancy is dead; but maturer  
And stronger than that is this love that is purer  
I offer you now. And I beg you be pitiful!  
None of the worst, out of all the wide city full,  
Need your true goodness as I do. I plead  
As I never have pleaded before."

"If your need

Be so great," she made answer quite slowly and faintly,  
While over her face came a look that was saintly,

"I never can meet it. I gave all I had

Long ago to another." She smiled in a sad,

Sober way that was touching to see. "You have more

Of love's riches than I. You can some time restore

Any loss of your love, you believe; but for me—

I must always love on, though my love ever be



But a grief and a bitterness."

"Say you are free  
From all pledges, Miss Hope," he went on to beseech ;  
"Say you do not quite hate me, and then I will teach  
You again to be glad and forget. I would take  
You to me, though I knew you were ill with the ache  
Of your love for another, believing you'd learn



In my arms to grow happy and strong, and return  
All I give you."

She thanked him, with eyes growing dim,  
For his charity broad.

"I am pledged but to Him

Who creates or permits every love. My one vow  
Is to follow his leading in patience, and bow  
To his will. He would never allow me to seek  
A new happiness, till he has taught me how weak  
Are affections of earth to bring happiness best.  
He is giving me now a hard lesson to test  
My submission to him. I must always deny  
What you ask ; for no need can be greater than my  
Certain duty. Besides, it would be but a sin  
Against God and ourselves for us two to begin  
Wedded life, with my heart buried deep in its grave,  
And your heart turned away from the Maker, who gave  
It capacities great."

"Do you hate me?" he asked  
With quick passion.

Her weakness was burdened and tasked  
To its uttermost.

"No. I have thought of you only  
As one of my friends,—as of one who was lonely,  
And so to be pitied, because he had kept  
The Lord out of his life." And she silently wept  
As she said this. "I pity you now, and I pray  
Him to pity you too."

"Yet you sit there, and say  
That you never will lead me to him, as you might.  
If I perish at last in the pitiful fight  
I have made and am making with faith, will you stand  
Conscience free, when you might have laid hold of my hand  
And uplifted me? *You* can believe in a God  
Who is kind, though he hurt you; you look at his rod  
As a discipline: I only doubt, as I must,  
Born a sceptic at best. But to live with your trust  
At my side would be next to believing, would hold me,  
At least, from denial complete."



“Though you told me,”

She answered, “that, were I henceforth to deny  
Your request, I should send you to ruin, still I  
Should deny it. Your duty lies only on you :  
You must do it, or suffer. And I must be true  
To myself and the teachings of God ; and these tell me  
That love is essential to love : they compel me  
Forever to hold myself free from a union  
Where two cannot meet in the perfect communion  
Of hearts, neither giving the other a measure  
It cannot return, and both finding all pleasure  
In giving their all. I have nothing to give.  
You would fall into folly and sin, should you live,  
Or attempt it, on husks of a poor toleration,  
Unfed and unhelpt by love’s full consecration  
Responding to yours. I should lead you to death,  
Should I bid you to come, with no love in the breath  
Of my bidding. The leading of God is far better  
Than mine ; for he binds with the beautiful fetter  
Of love beyond changing, that never can fail.”

“I would rather have your love than his.”

She grew pale

At his wicked irreverence.

“Pardon the thought,  
And the speaking it,” quickly he said.

“But you ought  
To beg pardon of him,” was her answer.

He lifted

His eyebrows amusedly.

“Some are not gifted  
At praying,” he parried. “I never should be.”

She was hurt by his manner, and he could but see  
His mistake.

“I was mad to suppose that my need  
Could win favor from you, or that passion could plead  
Out of lips so irreverent ever as mine,  
And not shock you. ’Twere madness and folly of thine,  
Could I even persuade you, to trust to my keeping  
The peace of your faith. I should win you to weeping  
The bitterest often. And still I believe  
You would help me, Miss Hope. I shall go but to grieve  
That my fate is unkind.” And a tenderer ring  
In his tones made her pity him more.

“I can bring  
You no heart’s-ease,” she answered him softly, “to please you,  
Since faith that is comfort to me cannot ease you.  
I live on its blessing to-day, as may all  
Who in trouble of soul to its ministry call  
For relief.”

“Are you happy?” he asked her.

The tears

On her face gave him answer.

“The Father who hears  
My petition each day would not grant it, I think,  
Should I ask him for happiness yet. I must drink  
The whole cup that he gives me, though bitter and deep.  
I may never be happy again, save in sleep  
And in dreams — as I once was, I mean; but the peace  
Of obedient service may cause me to cease  
Any longing for happiness lower.”

He saw

The great weariness marking her face; and with awe  
Of her faith that he never had yielded before,  
He arose to depart. As he stood at the door,  
He remarked, —

“Will you grant me some leave-taking token,  
To prove that I have not incurably broken

Our friendly relations ?' Your promise to breathe  
A brief prayer for me daily would always inwreathe  
Me in holy remembrance. I ask it as one,  
Who, long doubting your faith, has almost now begun  
To be sick of his doubt ; and I ask it for sake  
Of my love, that, in leaving you now, would here make  
Its confession of weakness. I've tasted the sweets  
Of all sinning ; I've mocked at the bitter defeats  
That have mastered me. Long in my weariness, tired  
Of these idle pretences, my soul has desired  
With a hungry desiring some help from without.  
As I came here to-day, in this pitiful doubt  
Of myself, to entreat you to give me your love,  
So I ask you to bear my great longing above  
All the sins that beset it. I know not the way,  
And I have not the words."

"I will promise to pray  
That some prayer may be taught you," she said. And her eyes  
Overflowed as she spoke. "God is near, and our cries  
He can hear, though so feeble and faint that they seem  
Like a breath in the night. And his help is supreme  
In its blessing. You'll know it sometime." And she smiled  
Through her tears.

"In your company faith had beguiled  
Me, perhaps, to believing long since. I have fear  
For my future alone. God is nearer me here  
By your side than he ever will come when I go  
Into ways of my choosing. I know this, and know  
I shall need you forever. Good-by."

As he went  
Thus abruptly, the strength of her womanhood spent  
To its uttermost, Geraldine sank to her knees,  
By a sofa, half fainting.

Through cruel degrees

She had come to a weakness so weary and worn,  
That it seemed she had suffered and sorrowed and borne,  
Until death, would be welcome.

Alas! had she known  
How another was tempted and beaten, alone,  
And unhelped of the Master, since asking had flown  
From his need, she might even have begged to surrender  
The burden of being.

But God is as tender  
And loving as wise. He in mercy will keep  
Too much seeing from eyes that already must weep.



## XXXI.



N the solitudes vast, in the wide, solemn  
spaces

Where mountains looked up with their  
reverent faces,

As if they besought benediction on all  
Who were troubled of soul, lingered  
Trent. Of the gall

Of self-scorn, self-condemnings, he drank day by day  
Wretched draughts. On his forehead the breezes might play  
From white snow-peaks that yonder gleamed always in sight;  
But he knew not the touch of their cooling delight.  
He was worn; but he cared for no healing. He waited  
Apart from his kind, in a gloom that was fated  
To blind him to every bright presence, and stood  
Face to face with dark evil, deserted of good.

There are terrible deeps that a man may go down  
When his feet are not stayed. From the beautiful crown  
Of some summit of gladness he sudden may sink  
Into blackness of hell, with no will but to shrink  
From the terror, no strength to leap upward, and hold  
Himself there in the sunlight.

The shadows that rolled  
Over Trent became darker and denser. The days  
Moved along like a dream. The white noons, the cool grays

Of the evenings, the dawns with their wonderful blushes  
On mountain and sky, and the marvellous hushes  
That stilled all the world,—what were these in the strait  
Of his being? Alone he confronted the great  
And unknowable mysteries. Life was his own,—  
To be lived amid pain; to give up with the groan  
Of an instant; to cling to, with skies like a psalm,  
And the air heavy laden with peace like a balm;  
To let go at his will when tempestuous sweeps  
Of the storm bore him down to these horrible deeps;  
To be sick of and scorn; to condemn as a gift  
Without blessing or worth; to give absolute shift—  
If he dare! Yes, his life was his own. What of death?  
The one heritage truly; the Silence that saith  
To all care and all effort, “Be still!” the one blessing  
The poorest of all may be sure of possessing;  
The rest from all fever; the peace from all pain;  
The one antidote certain for life’s bitter bane;  
All humanity’s right, that Divinity gave  
When he peopled the earth, and permitted a grave;  
The last mystery waiting mortality’s ken,  
To be read by and by—why not master it, then?  
What was Fame, that he cared for it? Only a speck  
On the ocean to sink in it; only a fleck  
In the blue far above him to fade in the sun,  
And be lost. What was Right, that the race he should run  
Against Wrong and be borne to the dust, but a bare  
And uncertain abstraction, that puniest care  
Like his own could not nourish or guard? What was Duty  
But just a poor idol, bereft of all beauty,  
That he had been worshipping blindly till now?  
What was Song, that she ever could place on his brow  
Any laurels to gladden him?—what but a faint  
Crying-out after concord, a feeble complaint



Across echoless distance, all efforts at singing?  
To yield them all up were the best, and by flinging  
Himself on the Future so misty and dim,  
To be rid of the Present defiant and grim.

"I have made up my mind," so he wrote to a friend,  
"To go out of the world. I would walk to the end  
Of my life at a step. Yes, I know you will say  
*Of life here*. But I'm dealing with things of to-day.  
They have wearied me utterly. What is the gain  
To do battle forever? The victories vain  
That must daily be won are but gilded defeats.  
I am sick of their wearying, vanishing sweets.  
There are men who will call him a coward who goes  
From the work that is his to the lasting repose  
Of the grave without call of the Master. I care  
For no speech of the crowd. But *you* know that I dare  
What the mass hold in terror. You know that I face  
The unknown of the ages—the limitless space  
Of the Ever-and-Ever—with courage that sees  
All its possible dread. I have drunk to the lees  
Of regret, and its poison has entered my soul.  
How it withers and burns! How my heart and the whole  
Of my riotous being are simply on fire!  
I am wild with the one overcoming desire  
To go out from this fever to limitless rest—  
To forget—if I may!

"Were you ever possessed  
Of the devils of love? Yes, my friend, there are such.  
They lay hold as with fingers of velvet: their touch  
Has the blessing of paradise in it at first,  
But God pity the man who has by them been cursed!  
For they rend at the end like the demons of hell.  
All the hope and the beauty of being, as well

As the fruit and the promise, are torn to a shred.  
 It were better, indeed, to be known of the dead  
 Than abide with demoniacs living and grim  
 Mid the tombs.

“Waste no words of your pity on him  
 Who can feel as I feel, and can write as I write.  
 He has only the scorn of himself. In his sight  
 He is just a demoniac, rent with a rage  
 That no Master of demons is near to assuage  
 And allay. And yet pity me, though I forbid  
 Any pitiful utterance! Pity me, hid  
 From the pity of God by a cloud of black doubt  
 That makes night of my day! I am beaten about  
 By a tempest unceasing. My anchors are gone.  
 It is gloom without end. I can pray for no dawn,  
 Since some sin of my being has smitten me dumb  
 Before him who might help me,—who only could come  
 Into tempest so fearful, and still it.

. . . “I wait

But some prospecting party to end the hard fate  
 Of this life, and begin again—where? They will take  
 A few letters for friends, but not one that will make  
 Any mention of purpose like this. My good-by  
 Will not burden another than you. When I lie  
 Here alone in the solitude, caring no more  
 Whether love be a fiction, or death be a door  
 Into fiction more idle, they’ll say I was killed  
 By some vagrant. You only will know that I stilled  
 My heart’s beating myself; and you will not contend  
 You are wiser than they, since you serve me as friend  
 With your silence. I know I shall like the long quiet  
 These mountains will give me. Their peace, when my  
 .riot  
 Of living is over, will stand me instead

Of the heaven that so blesses those happier dead  
Who have waited in patience to reach it. The Lord  
Must be near me henceforth ; and some meagre reward  
Will be mine for the pang of my dying.

“ Farewell !

The Beyond is so broad, that two never can tell  
If again they will meet when they lift its dark curtain  
To wander within it. This only is certain :  
The devils that mock me will miss me, and I  
Shall be free from *this* fever that burns me. Good-by ! ”

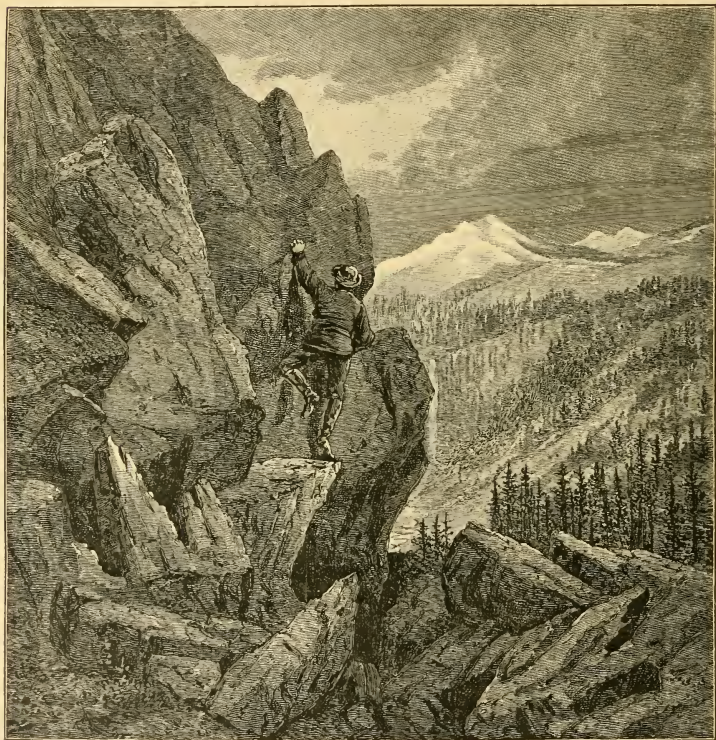
The days passed. The pain lingered. The fever burned hot  
In his veins. He was nigh to delirium. Not  
A stray miner came near where he tarried. He strolled  
Up and down the green valley in dreams. He grew old  
As if suns were the measure of years.

Then he made  
His resolve. He would climb the tall mountain, whose shade  
Had been over him daily ; would sound from its summit  
The deeps of blue distance beneath, with his plummet  
Of vision ; would gaze on the glory far lying  
Around him, again, and find easier dying  
Where heaven was the nearest.

The journey was long  
And was slow. It was helped by no snatches of song  
That he once might have sung. On its earlier way  
There were reaches of green, and cool shadiness lay  
Like a blessing upon it ; but later the steep  
Became barren and rugged : for hours he must creep  
Through the glare of the sun, along courses no feet  
Had made easy before him. The blistering heat  
Of the noon made him faint. He grew giddy and weak,  
Yet he staggered along. Far above him the peak  
Reared in solitude lonely. Majestic, sublime,

It awaited his coming.

Unconscious of time,  
Save that often it seemed an eternity here  
Had begun, he crept on. Through the white atmosphere  
He could see other peaks lifted far to the blue  
Of the sky; while the distance took boundaries new



As he slowly ascended, and range after range  
In sublimity rose, till an ocean of strange  
Rocky billows rolled far all around him, their tips

Only swept by the wandering, vanishing ships  
 Of the clouds, that before a warm breeze were adrift,  
 And their hues ever shifting and changing, as swift  
 The hot sun, the cool shadow, went by. The dark green  
 Of the timber-lines everywhere belted between  
 The light gray of the summits, and, sleeping below,  
 The soft green of those valleys where musical flow  
 The mad streams of the mountains; the glimmering gleams  
 Of white ledges shone out on the silvering beams  
 Of the sun, and gave light to the soberer veins  
 Lurking lower; and broad in the east the great plains  
 Rolled away from his vision, vast reaches of yellow,  
 Dry sod, with long swells like the sea, and a mellow  
 Haze marking their splendor remote.

As he rested

At times, he looked over that ocean, so crested  
 With color and grandeur, half heeding how splendid  
 The view had become, and yet feeling befriended  
 And helped by its breadth. Though the fever grew hotter  
 And fiercer within him, and often the water  
 Supply that he bore was diminished, his brain  
 Became steadier, truer, the throbbings of pain  
 At his heart were less wild, and the marvellous wonder  
 Of being laid hold on his insight; for under  
 The massiveness round a great thought seemed to hide  
 From his vision, though dimly and vaguely descried  
 By some deeper sense in him. He felt that he neared  
 The sublimities nearest to God. It appeared  
 To his sensitive soul, as yet higher he climbed,  
 That he came where his nature the nearest sublimed  
 To the nature divine. He grew out of his own  
 Narrow bondage of life into freedom alone  
 He can know who is filled by a new comprehension  
 Of infinite fact.



The day waned. The ascension  
More rugged became. The thin air was so light,  
That he panted for breath. Still above him the white  
Of the peak was uplifted against the blue arch  
Vaulting over, but lent him no shadow. His march  
Had begun, he believed, through eternity. Slowly  
He dragged himself up through the solitude holy,  
As slowly the sun swung its way down the west.  
The cool summit airs kissed him at last, as a guest  
Who was welcome. They fanned his faint heart. They  
    upbore him,  
As onward he went, till he saw just before him  
The crest that was highest of all.

When the sun  
Had sunk quite to his level, his journey was done,  
And he stood on the uttermost height, — a bald crown  
Of gray granite, moss-covered, from which, looking down  
Either side, he could see the dim valleys grow dimmer  
As deepened the shadows, could see the peaks glimmer  
With light far beyond them, could gaze on their faces,  
Uplifted around through the wide, solemn spaces,  
And marvel in awe.

“All the strength of the hills  
Is His also!” he murmured. “How weak are the wills  
Of His creatures! How puny the arms we outreach  
In our proudest endeavor! How idle the speech  
That we utter, the cries of our souls! Life is only  
An atom of weakness, each atom as lonely  
As if God had gone from the world.”

There were tears  
On his face. He fell prostrate, and swift the fleet years  
Passed before him as thus he lay prone. All their error,  
Their failure, their loss, he beheld. With a terror  
At heart that he never had known, here he faced



What he had been and was. He grew shamed and abased  
In the presence relentless each moment. He thought  
Of old Moses on Nebo, who, hungering, caught  
A sweet glimpse into being the best, and then gave  
It all up, with no mortal to hollow his grave.  
And he said to himself, "I have seen the fair land  
Where love lives in content; but I never can stand  
In its gladness, or sip of its honey and peace.  
This is Nebo to me. May it give me release  
From the bondage of passion forever!"

He lay

Thus in trouble of soul while the beautiful day  
Faded out. The west crimsoned to scarlet. The bars  
Which imprisoned the sun were blood-red. A few stars



Glinted down the blue deeps. The gray twilight let fall  
A soft mantle of shadows and silence on all.

Then afar from the north came a wonderful sweep  
Of black cloud that swift mounted the darkening steep  
Of the summit. Far thunder growled low. The sharp flashes  
Of lightning grew constant, and nearer the crashes  
That followed them. Over the man lying there  
Where the mercy of sleep had soon found him, the air  
Became scintillant, gleamed with fine courses of flame,  
As if fretted with fire. The whole mountain became  
But a cone for electric display.

He awoke

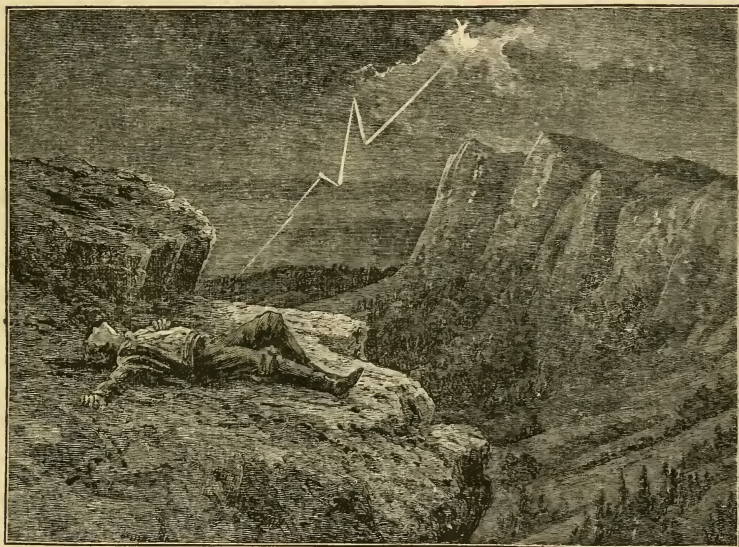
As the storm gathered might, and a thunder-gun spoke  
Just above him with utterance awful. He sprung  
To his feet. Was it hell? Had he certainly flung  
Himself into a future of horrors? The gloom  
Of far spaces was lurid with light, and the doom  
Of dark Tartarus shrouded him. Blinded and dazed  
For the instant, his brain in a whirl, as if crazed  
By some terrible pressure, he stood there, and strove  
To make sure that he heard but the breathings of Jove.

The mad lightning flew over the rocks of the summit  
In crinkles of flame. It shot down like a plummet  
Of fire through the deeps far beneath. The red flow  
Of its flashes lit up the black night with a glow  
Beyond color of speech. The whole atmosphere gleamed  
With the fluid electric that sparkled and streamed  
Round the visitor there as if mocking him, flaring  
Itself in his face as if vexed at the daring  
He showed, playing round him in circles that filled  
All his frame with their current.

At last, as he thrilled

To the touches of death in believing, there came  
From the deep far above him a forking of flame:  
A great glare flooded over the dark, and he fell  
Limp and lifeless, with never a creature to tell  
The wild story and sad, if forever the breath  
Of his being had fled, and this silence were death.

And he lay there alone, with his white, haggard face  
Looking up to the sky, neither longing nor grace



Of life marking it now ; while the pitiful rain  
Beat upon it, as though to wipe out all the pain  
It had known in the past. Thus he lay there alone,  
Smitten down, with no time for a thought or a groan, —  
Smitten down when he held a mad purpose to take  
His own being up wickedly, rashly, and break

It in twain in the face of his Maker, — struck down  
By the Maker himself, on the masterful crown  
Of that mountain sublime, ere the deed he had done,  
And the life of the future unfitly begun  
By a terrible sin in the present. He lay  
Thus alone till the storm spent itself, and the gray  
Of the dawn in the east began flushing with day.





XXXII.



OTHER NATURE is kind. The cool  
rain pelting there

In the face of the man smitten down  
gave him care

That was timely and saving. It rallied  
him so

From the shock he had suffered. It  
chilled the hot glow

Of the fire in his veins. 'Twas the medicine best  
For this fever that burned like a flame in his breast,  
And it blest him.

He woke as the morning grew strong  
To uncover the night; he awoke with a throng  
Of confused recollections besieging his brain.  
At the first, all his effort and striving were vain  
To recall what had happened; then slowly he came  
To himself. He remembered his journey, the aim  
That it had, the mad purpose that moved him, the night's  
Awful vision. He shut his eyes close; but the sights  
He had latest beheld were before him again.  
As they burned through his eyelids, he shuddered; and then,  
Rising up, looking out from the height, he was thrilled  
By a wonderful picture.

The tempest had stilled.  
Flying mists from the summit had flown to the deeps

Lower down. The lone peak was an island: its steeps  
Were encircled in fleeciness white,— a wide sea  
Without motion, milk-foamy, outreaching as free  
As the limitless ocean,— a sea with no sail  
On its surface to hint of a haven or gale,—  
A broad sea of white silence, where softly the hail  
Of some sailors unseen one might fancy he heard,  
Leaning over to listen.

The air never stirred  
To a breath. Far away in the east the round sun  
Had rolled up from this ocean of cloud, that begun  
To be silver beneath it. Across the broad sweep,  
Looking straight from himself to the sun, on the sleep  
Of this marvellous sea he beheld a bright shimmering,  
Scintillant pathway to glory, whose glimmering  
Beauty grew brighter while gazed on. Below,  
Hidden under a gloomy, dense mass, with no glow  
Of glad color to cheer it, green valleys lay dim  
In their twilight, and waited the morning.

For him

The warm sun had arisen in splendor that eyes  
Of a mortal but seldom behold. The clear skies  
Of the morning held blessings for him. The white sea,  
Reaching round his calm anchorage, glistened, that he  
Might be glad with the vision. For him, him alone,  
The sun emptied its glory so freely, that shone  
Over summit and sea. Solitary, and far  
From his fellows, as ever might seem a faint star  
Lost away in the wilderness spaces, he stood  
There deserted of evil, alone with the good.  
Here and there a gray mountain-peak rugged uplifted  
Its crown, but another lone island, where drifted  
No mortal along through the silence to keep  
Him companionship distant. The radiant deep



Was unpeopled ; its islands were desolate. He  
Was alone in the world. From that wonderful sea  
Of white splendor the sun had arisen to glow  
For himself, as if never a mortal might know  
Its bright blessing, beside, on the breadth of the earth ;  
For himself, as if for him the planet had birth  
In the thought of the Lord, as if for him the world  
Had been made, into wonderful space had been whirled,  
And the Maker had set him high up on its throne,  
And crowned him with glory as king of his own.

Then he saw, with a sense that was deeper than seeing,  
He *felt*, the great truth, that the lines of his being  
Ran always from him to his God ; that in fleeing  
From life he was fleeing from God ; that forever  
His being, God-given, ran through all endeavor  
To God ; that he cared for it, guarded it, held  
It to uses the best and the truest ; compelled  
It to answer for doing or promises ; knew  
Lot and purpose within it, as much as if through  
The long ages no mortal beside him could be,  
Or had been in the past, and as much as if he  
Were the one only creature of God's mighty hand,  
Set to serve him as subject, and do the command  
Of his will ; as if God and himself peopled all  
The broad universe.

Then, as a light fell on Saul  
When he rode to Damascus, convincing him swift  
Of his sin, while it clearly revealed the great gift  
Of his pardon, the glory that Trent beheld here  
Laid before him the sin of his purpose ; and clear  
As the glory itself he could see how the sin  
Had deluded his reason. Could penitence win  
Him forgiveness ? Could penitence ever beguile

The sweet mercy of God, and make certain the smile  
Of compassionate pity? He sank on his knees,  
A weak suppliant now:—

“Divine Father, who sees  
Every wandering soul, a poor prodigal comes  
To thy table, and begs for the merciful crumbs  
That his hunger can feed. See him now as he pleads  
For thy pardon! Thy bounty can measure his needs,  
And thy love can bestow. Let the light of thy face  
Shine upon him, as here he beseeches the grace  
Penitential to hallow his heart. Let him feel  
The strong clasp of thy tender embraces, and heal  
The deep hurts he has suffered from sinful desire.  
With thy touches of cooling remove the hot fire  
That his passion has kindled within him, and give  
Him thy peace. Make him eager hereafter to live.  
May he hold by thy gift of creation with pride  
That is reverent, knowing that always the wide  
And the infinite distance between him and thee  
Is bridged over by infinite love. Let him see  
The great glory of being, the equal and greater  
Concern of a trust from the Father-Creator  
Directly to him.

“Help him now, holy God,  
As again he begins the hard way to be trod  
Through the world. It is dark in the valleys; but far  
Above mist, above gloom, the glad sun-glories are.  
May he see them forever before him, as one  
Who has stood face to face here alone with the sun,  
And beheld the Lord’s presence. O Master divine!  
Let this morning to him be a token and sign  
In his memory ever, that always above  
The dim twilight of cloud glow the smiles of thy love  
And thy pardon compassionate.”

Melted and broken

By feeling intense that so feebly had spoken,  
His prayer became sobbing that moved him beyond  
Any utterance. Over his forehead the fond  
Morning breezes blew tenderly. Kneeling, he felt  
Their soft kisses of cooling, until as he knelt  
He grew calmer, and stronger of soul.

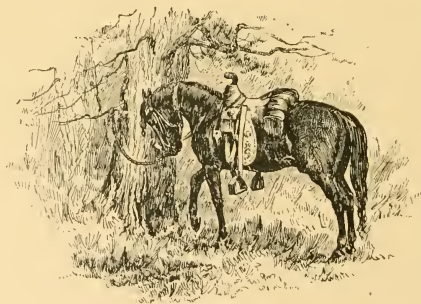
Then he rose

To his feet, and looked out on the scene of repose  
So magnificent round him. A vision supernal  
It was, in the light that from ages eternal  
Has glorified day, since the Deity spoke  
It to being, and earth into splendor awoke  
From its earliest night — a glad vision of peace.  
The white sea, like a calm that no tempest could cease ;  
The lone islands outlying in silence ; a rift  
Here and there in the deep, through which sudden and swift  
Could be seen a green valley in depths far below, —  
A glad vision. Alas that a picture with glow  
So ineffable, beauty and blessing so fair,  
Should as soon fade away as the mists of the air !

He was faint with long fasting, was hungry and weak,  
When with footsteps that faltered he turned from the peak  
To begin his descent. In the valley he knew  
He had food, and a horse ; but he said his adieu  
To the summit, in doubt if he ever could gain  
What so greatly he needed. If upward had lain  
The hard journey, he soon must have sunk by the way ;  
But he stumbled along down the mountain-side, gray  
With the mist that he entered at length, till he stood  
Underneath it, and saw it inwrap like a hood  
The far height he had left. Then below the dark chill  
Of its sombreness, gloomy, forbidding, he still

Sought the valley beneath.

More than once did he sink;  
Overcome and exhausted with effort, and think  
That he never should rise. More than once did he ask  
For the strength that he had not, to finish his task.  
As the valley grew nearer, more level the slope  
Of the mountain became; and a lingering hope  
Died away in his heart of attaining the spot  
Where his camp had been made. The sun burned him, as hot  
It shone down through the vanishing clouds. He grew sick  
Unto death. His lips bleeding, his tongue become thick  
From the thirst that beset him, he scarcely could lend  
Any form to a prayer. He must walk to the end  
Of his life, as it seemed, when he would not, nor seek  
The one help, save in dumb aspiration. And weak  
As a babe at the breast, when his feeble endeavor  
Had spent itself utterly, hopeless as ever  
Was babe that had never breathed hope, he sank prone  
To the earth, and lay there with a pitiful moan  
Faintly marking his slow and irregular breath,  
Alone telling that still he was master of death.



### XXXIII.



N a late autumn-day Mrs. Lee sat alone  
In her room. If some part of her  
beauty had flown  
Through long vigils of waiting, a casual  
glance  
In her face could not show it. Some  
tale of romance

Mediaeval lay idly before her unread,  
Though its pages were open. Dumb sorrow, that shed  
Only tears of repression, looked out of her eyes.  
One might easily think she was hearing the cries  
Of a soul in despair.

It was mid-afternoon,  
And for visits of form rather early; but soon  
She was summoned below by a caller. No name  
Had been given the servant, — a friend, who but came  
With a message of interest: this was the word  
That was brought to her. Wondering, when she had heard  
What the message might be, if the effort to hear it  
Would seem well repaid, and beginning to fear it  
As something portentous of ill, she descended  
The stairs. If her life had on calmness depended,  
She could not more calm have appeared when she went  
Through the drawing-room door, and saw Percival Trent.  
He looked aged and worn, as if years had gone past

Since they parted. Some change had been wrought that  
would last

In his life, she as quickly discerned.

“You’ve been ill,  
Mr. Trent,” she remarked as they met, “and are still  
But an invalid.”

“Yes: I was ill in the mountains  
A month,” he replied; “am in search of the fountains  
Of health, now, at home.”

“I had fears you were dead.  
It is two or three summers, I think, since you said  
Me a word. Were you reckless of life?”

A quick pain  
Made more haggard his face.

“I’d have counted it gain  
But a little before to have died; but I prayed  
More than ever to live when it seemed I had laid  
Myself down at death’s door.”

“Tell me of it,” her face  
Growing eager and pitying now, and the lace  
On her bosom betraying the heart-beats below.

“There is little to tell. It is little I know  
Of the story, at any rate. Wandering down  
To my camp in the valley, from climbing the crown  
Of a mountain, my strength began failing me. All  
I could do by and by was to stagger and fall,  
And then lie there unconscious. The next that I knew  
I was lying in camp, not my own, with a true  
Good Samaritan nursing me. Providence sent him  
That way in the wilderness surely, and lent him  
To save me. He says I had fever, and lay  
On the edge of the grave for a fortnight. One day  
I awoke out of sleep, and I found myself there,



As ~~he~~ said, in the camp of a stranger. His care  
 And the Lord's brought me through. When my strength  
     had returned,  
 He came with me to Denver."

"He certainly earned  
 The undying regard of your friends," she declared,  
 Speaking warmly. "You cannot so early be spared  
 From the need of the world." And the look that she gave  
 Had a hungering in it.

"I never shall crave  
 To go out of this being again. I have seen  
 How it links with the being of God, how between  
 The divine and the human runs ever a thought  
 That should glorify life."

It was clear he had caught  
 A new glimpse of the sacredness being might hold,  
 From his words and his tone, and she wondered.

"I told  
 A man dying," he said, "a while since, I would bear  
 A hard message to you. He was past any care  
 That could save him,— was dying alone."

As he spoke  
 Very slowly and sadly, he heard the slow stroke  
 Of a neighboring bell, and it seemed like a knell  
 For the dead. He went on, while his utterance fell  
 To a low monotone, and she listened as one  
 Who half feared, half divined, what was coming.

"His sun  
 Set at noon. It had been a sad life at the best.  
 Before going, he told me a part; and the rest  
 I discovered from papers of his. He had said  
 I should learn his wife's name from these when he was dead,  
 And should find her."

The woman who listened grew pale.

But kept silence.

“My search could not possibly fail  
Of success, when, directed so plainly as here,  
I found guidance.”

He gave her a picture, — as clear  
A reflection of her as she ever had faced  
At the mirror; and when in her hand he had placed  
The mute semblance, he waited her answer.



She took  
The small portrait, but offered no word. A dumb look  
Of appealing came over her face.

“Richard Lee  
Was your husband. He died, with none near him but me,  
In a cañon some miles from a camp. I sought aid

From there later, and buried him under the shade  
Of a pine, where he died. In this package you'll find  
The few papers he had, and his watch."

"You are kind,"

She said faintly, accepting them; much as if saying it  
Only to prelude some question, delaying it.

"No: I am cruel," he answered her sadly,  
"To you and myself. I would only too gladly  
Have spared you the pain of this meeting, and saved  
Me the hurt it has cost. But I could not. I braved  
Your distress and my own, as I must, for the sake  
Of my promise to him, and because I must make  
A last call upon you."

She looked up at him then,  
With her eyes full of tears.

"You have come to me when  
I can read you my riddle of life, can unmask  
What before I have hidden; and now will you task  
Me to say a good-by that is final? I ask  
For your pardon and pity. Forgive me for keeping  
The truth from you so! I am bitterly reaping  
My harvest of folly."

The pain in her voice  
Betrayed more than the words.

"There is left me no choice,"  
He responded with feeling. "We cannot continue  
To meet as if friends. I am free now to win you,  
And you are as free to be won; but our ways  
Must henceforth lie apart."

She looked at him with gaze  
So intense that he trembled.

"What was it you learned  
Of that man as he died, that so certainly turned

You away from me? What was the lie that he sealed  
His lips with at the last?"

As she boldly appealed  
To him thus, she was calmer than he. It was hard  
To repeat the hard tale of a woman's life marred  
As hers had been, and hard to refuse all replying  
When questioned so keenly.

"He was not belying  
You wholly. You were the man's wife?"

Thus he parried  
Her queries, or tried to.

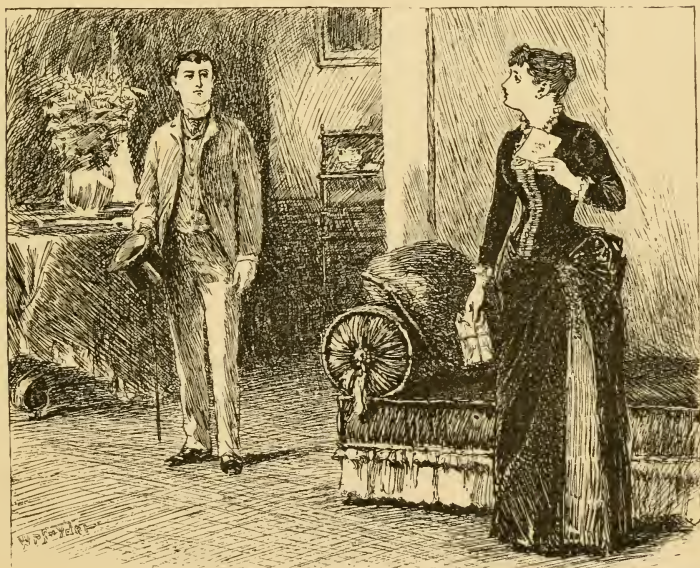
"I was. We were married  
When I was a child, now it seems to me, — more  
Than a lifetime ago, I could think it, — before  
I at all comprehended what loving or living  
Might mean; for I gave him my hand when the giving  
Was much like the gift of a book to a friend, —  
The mere thing of a moment. The saddest amend  
Has been made for my careless bestowal. Ten years  
He has called me his wife, — a long season of tears,  
And of pain to my soul. Within less than a week  
From the wedding I loathed him, — yes, loathed him; but,  
meek

As a woman, I yielded myself to his will.  
He was gross in his nature, — so gross he could kill  
Every sensitive feeling within me, and mock  
At the murder in scorn. There are times when his talk  
I can hear even yet, till no hell of hereafter  
Could madden me so. There are times when his laughter  
All devilish crazes me now, or so nearly  
I wonder if reason is left me. Yes, dearly,  
With price beyond any computing, I've paid  
For the gift that I gave him. My girlhood was made  
A dark shadow of gloom, and my womanhood knew

Only shadow and chill till you came. If I grew  
To be heartless and reckless, my friend, do you wonder?  
Cut off from all happy content, put asunder  
From all that I craved, wedded so to the worst  
In the world that is ever incarnate, and cursed  
By my bondage with sin so diverse it took in  
All the grosser and uglier forms, I might sin  
Without adding to sorrow, I often was sure;  
But I did not. I held my poor womanhood pure,  
Save as soiled by its contact with him. Did he tell  
You a different story?"

"He said that you fell  
From your womanhood's purity, covered with shame  
The home-altar," he answered her frankly.

A flame  
Of indignant denial burned over her cheeks.





"You believed him?" she asked. "All those pitiless weeks  
When you said me no word, you believed me to be  
A false wife? Is it so?"

"You forget, Mrs. Lee,  
That my silence was nearly the silence of death."

"I remember now," faintly she said; and her breath  
Became quicker, her manner more passionate. "Did you  
Believe for one moment his story? I bid you,  
By all we have been to each other, and all  
That we might be, to tell me!"

"One scarcely can call  
It believing, when doubt is as strong as belief,"  
He made answer. "And partial believing brought grief  
To me keen as you suffer at knowing that you  
Could be partially doubted."

He paused.

"I was true  
To myself and to him," she declared, "till you taught me  
What loving and life might in blessing have brought me.  
Imprudent and reckless at times, I confess,  
I cared little for gossip and comment, and less  
For the jealousy feeding on both. As for him  
Who pronounced me untrue by and by — 't was a grim  
And a sickening burlesque on purity, when  
*He* accused me of shame and dishonor. The men  
And the women of brothels knew well where *he* spent  
Both his time and my money.

"One day, Mr. Trent,  
When my baby came to me," — a far-away look  
In her eyes as she spoke, — "in brief gladness I took  
It up into my arms, and I said to the Lord,  
'Thou hast given me here what must be my reward  
For the misery mine. May it minister so



To my need, I may better and worthier grow!’  
But it sickened. The dear little thing slipped away  
From my clinging embrace. It was cruel to pray  
It might live; for the blood in its innocent veins  
Knew the sins of its father, and carried the stains  
Of his lecherous life in each drop. So he killed it  
By fatal transmission. They said the Lord willed it:  
I hated him then; I have doubted him since.

“After that, Richard Lee went away. I can wince  
Even yet at the pain that I felt, though, before  
I had courage to force him to leave me. The more  
And more freely I gave him of means, but the lower  
He sank into defilement. I stopped his supplies,  
And he robbed me of jewels, and pawned them. My cries  
And my pleadings he jeered at. At length he accused me  
Of shame;” and she shuddered. “The charge but amused  
me

At first. But I had been too careless; and some,  
Who professed to be friends, for the moment were dumb  
In declaring belief in my purity. None  
Can so hurt you as friends with their silence. The sun  
Cast a shadow far darker than ever on me,  
When my husband so hedged me about, I could see  
No escape. Then I offered to pay Richard Lee  
The full half of my annual income to go  
Out of sight of me ever, and stay there; and so  
He enlisted next day, having drunk enough then  
To be brave. I could hardly be sorrowful when  
They reported him dead; but my sorrow was deep  
When he came to life later. To-day if I weep,  
It will be for the loss of your love.”

“I believe  
In your truth and your purity both, and I grieve

That we cannot be friends in the future, except  
At a distance. This passion of ours, that has swept  
Through our lives like a western tornado across  
The wide prairies, may leave us with feeling of loss  
And of cruel besetment. But both of us soon  
Will breathe freer and purer. A calm afternoon  
Of content and uplifting may come to us each  
For the morning of storms. I have heard the clear speech  
Of my Master appointing the way I must take,  
And I enter it patiently, gladly. The ache  
Of your life will be healed by and by, and the way  
That you walk will be pleasant, if lonely to-day."

She smiled sadly, half bitterly.

"Prophecy drops  
From your lips like a song, but unhappily stops  
Too far short of a plain revelation. It yields  
Me poor comfort to say that through sunshiny fields  
I may go on some morrow, if pain shall have ceased,  
Simply painless alone. It might give me at least  
Just a hint of companionship: but there is only  
One soul to mate mine; and the way must be lonely  
That will not permit me to walk by your side."

"I am weak, and unworthy all love," he replied.

"I had plighted my love and my faith, ere we met,  
And was true to the pledge. When my sympathy set  
With your current of need, then swift passion conspired  
To make league against love. All my nature was fired  
With the conflict. I wrote you, I said you, no sentence  
Of passionate feeling, but called for repentance  
Of manhood and faith. Thus it was till my pledge  
Was returned to me broken. I stood on the edge  
Of dishonor, and saw myself ready to sink

Into pitiless shadow. And there, by the brink  
Of that darkness that opened, shone out a great light.  
I saw clearly again, and I stood in affright  
At the vision so clear. Strong as ever the love  
I had plighted and broken appeared, set above  
Every other profession, yet shadowed by sin,  
And made darker by loss. That I ever can win  
My great losses once more, I may hope in some morrow,  
But dare not to-day.

“Yet to-day I may borrow  
Your thought, that victorious living is better  
Than happiness. Count me forever your debtor,  
If slowly the thought in my life crystallizes  
To character. Out of the many surprises  
That wait for insnaring my weakness, I then  
Shall come forth a glad victor, and happier men  
Will not know such a blessing as crowns me.

“And you —

Let me echo your thought as the final adieu  
That I speak to you now, Mrs. Lee. I could never  
Make certain and true any patient endeavor  
Of yours: I could never prove company best  
For your soul. There is only one Strength we may test  
To the uttermost, knowing it never can fail:  
May you find it!”

He rose, and his cheeks were as pale  
As her own when she spoke.

“And this, then, is the end?”  
She besought him with pleading.

“Say, rather, my friend,  
That this moment we make a beginning in living  
Victorious,” firmly he answered, and giving  
His hand to her now.

As she took it, they stood

Face to face in farewell.

“You are noble and good,  
But as cruel as fate,” she declared. “And my fate  
Has been crueller far than the grave. I shall wait  
For the kindness of that with impatient appeal,  
Till it comes.”

The sharp pain in her words he could feel  
Keenly stabbing his heart.

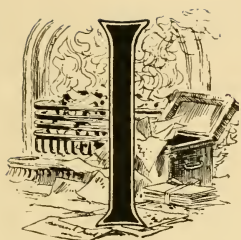
“May you learn that the blessing  
Of death is not one to be coveted!” pressing  
Her hand between his. “May you see, as I see it,  
That life has its uses and sweetness, albeit  
Its crosses and losses are great!”

She grew faint  
From her hunger and hurt and the steady restraint  
Over self. As he saw it, he tenderly bore  
Her across to a sofa, and strode to the door.

So they parted,—the woman half fainting, no word  
Of good-by slipping through the white lips that had erred  
In confessing a passion unduly, no token  
Of bitter reproach for the words he had spoken;  
The man with a sense of distrust making laggard  
His self-justifyings, his face growing haggard  
And pinched with the pity and torment of soul  
That possessed him,—to find, if God please, the one goal  
At the end of the world, whither every road leads  
That we walk in, whatever our longing and needs.



## XXXIV.



It was months before Trent became stalwart again;  
But he took up his labor, and went  
among men,  
In much bodily weakness, and often  
depressed,  
Yet with strength of his manhood  
renewed. And none guessed

That his life was a penitence daily; that, giving  
Brave words for the true and the good, he was living  
A bitter repentance for sin he had pondered  
And planned; that alone in despair he had wandered  
To lay down the burdens of being. He held  
His old cheeriness well before others, compelled  
The good-humor that won him his friends, went about  
As a light, not a shadow. But often some doubt  
Of himself sent him into the gloom that was near,  
Even when he stood most in the sun; or a fear  
Of the mercy of God made him weak as a child,  
And despairing as one who is never beguiled  
By the blessing of Christ.

At the first, in December's  
Chill dreariness, sitting alone by the embers  
He stirred to a blaze, he made offering gladly  
Of Mrs. Lee's letters, then musingly, sadly,

As flickered the flames into quivering flashes  
Of light, and then died, he wrote, —

ASHES TO ASHES.

A grate full and glowing: now burn every letter  
That tells of the past.  
Ashes to ashes! 'Tis better, far better,  
Such love should not last.

Words half aflame with the warmth of their passion  
Will need but a spark:  
Nothing remains but a film that is ashen,  
Faded, and dark.

How the fire leaps in its madness so merry,  
And kisses the lines!  
Darkness will soon all their sentiment bury  
Where no one divines.

What is the past? A wild dream that has faded,  
A story soon told:  
All of its sunshine to sombre is shaded,  
Its summer grown cold.

Bleak blow the winter winds down the to-morrows  
With shiver and moan.  
How the grate glows with the fever it borrows  
From love that is flown!

. . . . .

Chilly the air is; the fever is dying  
That fed the hot grate:  
Out in the night the chill night-breeze is sighing  
As plaintive as fate.



Falter the flames into flickering flashes,  
Till dark is the room :  
Whisper it tenderly, "Ashes to ashes!"  
Here in the gloom.

Nothing remains of a marvellous treasure  
That one day was mine, —  
Passion disguised as a love beyond measure,  
And now without sign.

Nothing remains? Ah! perhaps it were better  
Were ashes the whole;  
But somehow I fancy each passionate letter  
To me had a soul;

And in the dark days of my dreary Decembers  
Each soul may return,  
And here in the gloom of my flickering embers  
May sacrifice burn.

No matter. Good-by to the words that were spoken  
In days that are fled!  
For passion burned out, let the ashes be token,  
As dust for the dead.

So he put from his sight what he could of the past  
That might trouble him, or that a shadow might cast  
On his present, to prove but a shadow of hurting,  
Not healing. His manhood grew stronger, asserting  
Its purified purpose in patience, and leaning  
More nearly each day upon God. The deep meaning  
Of life became clearer and sweeter. He knew  
A diviner and holier thought running through  
All its uses than ever before. He was eager  
With tongue and with pen for the right. To beleaguer  
The wrong was henceforward his mission with zeal  
More intense, and with faith more uplifted and leal.

And the time wore away. He shunned Rivermet chiefly,  
Or tarried there only as needful, and briefly.  
His hunger of heart for the love that he missed,  
And yet knew to be his, would at seasons insist  
Upon going to Geraldine straightway, and telling  
Its craving of need, with insistence compelling  
Anew the great gift of herself; but he waited  
In patient endeavor the gift, that, belated,  
Must minister unto his need, if he ever  
Should know the sweet ministry more. Yet he never  
Felt utterly hopeless when once he had come  
Into healthier life. If to-day he were dumb,  
Some to-morrow might happily gladden him, when  
He could win her to hearing and trust. Until then  
He would do a man's work as he might, among men.

There are souls who walk cheerfully with us, and lift  
Us to new aspirations by bountiful gift  
Of their courage and hope, who are braver than those  
Going forth into battle. Each day their repose  
Is but peace after striving. Each day they have fought  
A strong enemy hidden within, and have caught  
The sweet grace of their patience from victory won  
Over self. And each day the hard duty, best done,  
Is this facing a foe ever present, with hope  
Never yielding, and courage that always can cope  
With the haunting defiance, and conquer it. Add  
To the strife of to-day the remembrances mad  
Of a bitter defeat in the past, the pale ghost  
Of a mastery cruel, whose torment is most  
In the memory yet like a prelude of hell,  
And we pity the soul that from victory fell;  
But we never can blame if again there be tears  
And laments for a victory lost.

Through the years'  
Busy rounds, in much hope and much fearfulness, went  
Up and down uncomplainingly Percival Trent.  
As he labored, his love for the work best returning  
True wages of labor, he slowly was earning  
The prizes of fame. Without shaping his life  
For the public, a place in the front of the strife  
Between error and truth was forever accorded him.  
Men with brave honor of manhood rewarded him  
Out of their generous confidence, yielded  
Him heartiest praise for the blows that he wielded  
Defending the right, made him willing and strong  
When unwilling and weak he became; and his song  
Grew as sweet and as clear as his eloquent speech  
Became braver and stronger. Its musical reach  
Was as broad as the longings of men, and it thrilled  
With new tenderness. Through it some mastery willed  
The deep feeling of hearts, till they listened and stirred  
In their stupor or pain as if touched by a word  
Out of heaven. And as always the singer hears much  
In his song that is lost to the many, some touch  
Of divinely beneficent blessing he knew,  
As he sang, that was never sent pulsating through  
Any heart but his own.

He had sweet compensation  
For singing. A tender and hallowed elation  
Of spirit came to him in place of depression  
And pain. In his heart there was gladder possession  
Than doubt and distrust. And if silent he kept,  
Walking on for a day while all melody slept  
In his soul with no sunshine to thrill it and wake it,  
Some comfort came over his journey to make it  
Less dark: the warm thanks of glad hearts he had cheered  
Were borne to him in cheering, and life was endeared

To himself as for others he made it a gladder  
 And holier thing. If his song became sadder  
 At times than a lyric of hope, it was rare  
 That it had not a hope hidden under, a care  
 Reaching through it for others more hopeless, a thought,  
 Out of hunger and heartache and loneliness caught,  
 For some hunger of hope to make feast of.

At times,

Ringling clear as a chime through his musical rhymes,  
 Came a glad *Jubilate*, — a song full of praise  
 For the light in the night, for the glory of days  
 Without shadow of dark, for the glow and the glory  
 Of being. And often through legend or story  
 Some homily ran in disguise, close akin  
 To the teaching of Christ, that persuasive could win  
 Where a plainer appeal might repel. So he preached  
 A wide gospel of good. So he happily reached  
 The closed ear of indifference often, and made  
 The great heart of humanity thrill as he played  
 On its quivering strings. So he brought to clear seeing  
 The secret of life, as in

### BUILDING AND BEING.

The king would build, so a legend says,  
 The finest of all fine palaces.

He sent for Saint Thomas, a builder rare,  
 And bade him to rear them a wonder fair.

The king's great treasure was placed at hand,  
 And with it the sovereign's one command, —

“Build well, O builder so good and great!  
 And add to the glory of my estate.

"Build well, nor spare of my wealth to show  
A prouder palace than mortals know."

The king took leave of his kingdom then,  
And wandered far from the haunts of men.

Saint Thomas the king's great treasure spent  
In worthier way than his master meant.

He clad the naked, the hungry fed,  
The oil of gladness around him shed.

He blessed them all with the ample store,  
As never a king's wealth blessed before.

The king came back from his journey long,  
But found no grace in the happy throng

That greeted him now on his slow return,  
To teach him the lesson he ought to learn.

The king came back to his well-spent gold;  
But no new palace could he behold.

In terrible anger he swore, and said  
That the builder's folly should cost his head.

Saint Thomas in dungeon dark was cast,  
Till the time for his punishment dire were passed.

Then it chanced, or the good God willed it so,  
That the king's own brother in death lay low.

When four days dead, as the legend reads,  
He rose to humanity's life and needs.

From sleep of the dust he strangely woke,  
And thus to his brother the king he spoke:—

“I have been to Paradise, O my king!  
And have heard the heavenly angels sing.

“And there I saw, by the gates of gold,  
A palace finer than tongue has told;

“Its walls and towers were lifted high  
In beautiful grace to the bending sky;

“Its glories, there in that radiant place,  
Shone forth like a smile from the dear Lord’s face.

“An angel said it was builded there  
By the good Saint Thomas, with love and care

“For our fellow-men, and that it should be  
Thy palace of peace through eternity.”

The king this vision pondered well,  
Till he took Saint Thomas from dungeon-cell,

And said, “O builder! he most is wise  
Who buildeth ever for Paradise.”





XXXV.



GREAT audience gathered in Rivermet  
Hall

To hear words of reform. It was late  
in the fall,  
And the night had the glory of winter,  
with less  
Than its frostiness brilliant.

The leading address

Was to be, as a newspaper item declared,  
By a man of the people,—a man who had dared  
To be true to himself and all manhood, at peril  
Of popular favor; who planted the sterile  
And adamant wayside with seeds of the right,  
And could wait for the harvest; who, until to-night,  
Had not spoken for Rivermet hearing in years.  
If fine irony lurked in the language for ears  
Quick to catch it, the writer might well have been pardoned.  
The wayside of life has forever been hardened  
By selfishness, strewn with the rocks of dispute  
And denial and error; and whoso would fruit  
The good seed of the truth must be patient indeed,  
If on ground that is stony he scatter his seed:  
Yet all harvests of time worth the reaping have grown  
From an acreage rocky where patience had strewn.  
In the crowded assembly sat Geraldine, flushed

With expectancy eager; or haply she blushed  
At the conscious desire that was hers. She had schooled  
Her poor heart into silence, she thought; she had cooled  
Its hot burnings, or smothered them so they no more  
Could arouse the old fever of pain: but, before  
She looked into the face of the speaker, she knew  
That she waited with longing and hunger that grew  
Beyond all satisfaction she ever might find.  
She must love to the end, whether loving be kind  
Or be cruel; must love, and be keenly alive  
To her love; and no long separation could shrive  
Her of loving, or bring her the absolute peace  
Of unlovingness. Yet she had found a release  
From the bitterest bondage of love. She had stood  
In the freedom of faith, and had seen life a good  
And a beautiful thing, though by sorrow beset:  
In a ministry sweet she had learned to forget  
Her own sorrowing need, and be glad: she had measure  
Of happiness, measure of peace, in the pleasure  
That grew out of daily bestowing.

As Trent

Came before them, the air was all smitten and rent  
By the storm of applause; and her pulse quicker beat  
As she looked once again in his face from her seat  
Near the front of the hall. He was changed. He had older  
And manlier grown; and a careful beholder  
Could see in his smile a great weariness hide, —  
Not alone of the head, but the heart. The strong tide  
He had buffeted long, the bold errors without,  
And, within, the old struggle with passion and doubt,  
Had been wearing to soul and to brain. But his speech  
Held perennial freshness within it for each  
Of that waiting assemblage; and round after round  
Of tumultuous cheers gave approval.

## The sound

Of his voice and the sight of his face were too much  
For her fancied control over self; and the touch  
Of swift tears on her cheek brought to Geraldine shame  
And distress. The keen gladness that thrilled her became  
But reproaches and bitterness. Longing unrest  
Was upon her, a need and a craving unguessed  
Before thus she was mastered. For so to be near him  
Was only half pleasure, half pain. Could she hear him  
Once breathing her name; could she know that he spoke it  
With love undivided as faith ere he broke it, —  
Ah! then she might go from him comforted, strong,  
And content in the will of the Lord. But to long  
For his answering love through a distance decreed  
By the wisdom of God, and to know that her need  
Never met a response; to be conscious, not merely  
Of distance that held them apart, but as clearly  
To feel that no cry of his heart came to hers  
Through the spaces between, — ah! the hope that defers  
Maketh sick; but the hope that is hopeless can pain  
To sore agony.

## Hiding her face, and the rain

Of hot tears that ran over it, Geraldine heard  
Without heeding what followed, yet melted and stirred  
To the deeps of her soul by the current magnetic  
That throbbed through the place. If the words were  
pathetic  
That came from those lips she had kissed, she but knew it  
Unconsciously. Over their meaning, and through it,  
Went pulsing a thrill and a message that spoke  
To her only; that through the vast concourse awoke  
No such answer as hers.

## She was dimly aware

That a gathering tempest of cheers blew the air

Into waves of approval around her again,  
After silence that spoke as approvingly, when,  
Far above the applause that went echoing round,  
Striking sharp on the sense as a thunder of sound  
Amid hushes of stillness, she heard a wild cry  
With swift terror outwinging it, —

“Fire!”

Then to fly  
Was the impulse of all. Women shrieked, and the faces  
Of men became ghastly. They rose in their places,  
And surged for the doors. A mad panic impended,  
And death brooded grim over life, when ascended  
A clarion call of command that arrested  
The tumult, and forced them to hear. He who breasted  
Their purpose insane stood as calm he had stood  
But a moment before, and entreated them.

“Good  
And brave people,” he said, “the great danger to you  
Is in haste; for the flames are above us. Be true  
To strong manhood and womanhood now, would you live  
To be strong men and women to-morrow. I’ll give  
You the signal when haste is imperative. None  
Are in peril this moment. Pass out.”

He had won  
Them to reason; and, standing there steady and cool  
As a master dismissing his turbulent school,  
By his mightier will he restrained them.

And she  
Whom he loved and who loved him, as calmly as he  
Stood and looked at the crowd, little caring to go  
Since he stayed. She had torn off her veil, and a glow  
Of excitement illumined her face, while the light  
Of their tears glistened still in her eyes. The mad fright  
Had not seized her, although she had seen at the first

The red flames lap the ceiling, and knew how the worst  
Might appall. But she felt in his presence a glad,  
Indefinable safety, that held her, and bade  
Her to wait.

The crowd lessened. She lingered alone  
In that part of the hall. The swift flames having flown  
All along the bright fresco just over the stage,  
Leaping lower, ran hissing and snapping in rage  
At the man who stood under them, seeming to care  
For each one but himself. Seeing which, with a prayer  
For them all, she turned toward him, as only intent  
On the figures receding he seemed.

“Mr. Trent!

You forget your own safety,” she cried.

As he turned  
At her sudden appeal, close in rear of him burned  
The hot breath of the blaze. He sprang down to the floor,  
And as quickly flew to her.

“I saw you before,  
And I saw that you waited,” he answered her, speaking  
With tremulous haste. “It is time we were seeking  
Safe exit. Our ways lie together till death  
Shall divide us.”

Around them the feverish breath  
Of the flames became hotter and fiercer. Without  
There were shoutings and cheers; but amid all the doubt  
That surrounded, one certainty came to them each,  
Clear and sweet as the sunlight, too holy for speech,  
And too happy for smiles. As he looked in her eyes,  
So she looked into his, out of patient and wise  
Revelation and hope; and love’s certain assurance  
Shone glad on them both with its pledge of endurance  
And faith.

They were last to pass out from the smoke



That grew blinding and stifling, as after them broke  
Lurid torrents of fire. In the street they were greeted  
By thundering cheers that were caught and repeated  
On quivering lips by the masses who waited  
To see him appear.

The great building was fated  
For ruin and ashes. No effort could check  
The omnivorous demons that fed on its wreck  
Amid laughter demoniac, shrieking and screaming—  
Mad fiends of the flames. Like a horrible dreaming  
The picture became to these two as they stayed



With the rest to behold it.

At length, when there laid

But a smouldering pile sobbing up to the night,  
They went slowly away.

“So the passion whose might  
Came between us burned out into ashes,” he said.  
“Let the dead of our yesterdays bury its dead.  
You are mine for to-morrow and always; and I  
Shall be true to a love never dead till I die.”

With the tenderest speech to his own she replied, —  
“The past narrows to nothing. To-morrow is wide  
As eternity. God, who is loving and just,  
Whispers, ‘Ashes to ashes, and dust unto dust,’  
Over all that is gone. Let it sleep, while in trust  
We walk on through the future together.”

Above,  
The stars glistened in blessing. To be and to love  
Became deeper and truer and holier far,  
For the narrowing past. Every hallowing star  
Shed a glory beneficent on them, to tint  
The broad morrow with softness, and leave but a hint  
Of the night overflown in the mellower splendor  
Of day.

So in reverent, final surrender  
Of each unto each, they uplifted the burdens  
Borne separate long, to grow glad with the guerdons  
Of victory sweeter than any they know  
Who are never twin-souled: so at last would they go  
In the strength of each other and God till the end,  
Seeing each within each truest lover and friend.

They were wedded at Christmas. Next summer they went  
For a bridal trip down the St. Lawrence. Content

Kept them company sweet. A far summer that seemed  
When he sailed there before; and, if once he had dreamed  
Of such beauty and peace, it could hardly have been  
More indeed like a dream that he lingered within.  
He had drifted away from all memories keen;  
And his life, like the river, ran smooth and serene:  
He had come where the current set calm to the sea,  
And the sum of each day was to love and to be.  
They were long at the Islands.

One night as they tarried  
Trent, smiling but silent, to Geraldine carried  
A newspaper marked: and she read in it, —

#### MARRIED.

Last evening at eight, at the church of All Souls,  
In this city, Bishop Delancy Canolles  
And the rector the Reverend Doctor Pardee,  
Major Archibald Mellen and Isabel Lee.

656















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